



THORGAL

The Blue Plague

ROSINSKI - VAN HAMME



G. ROSINSKI - J. VAN HAMME

ARTWORK

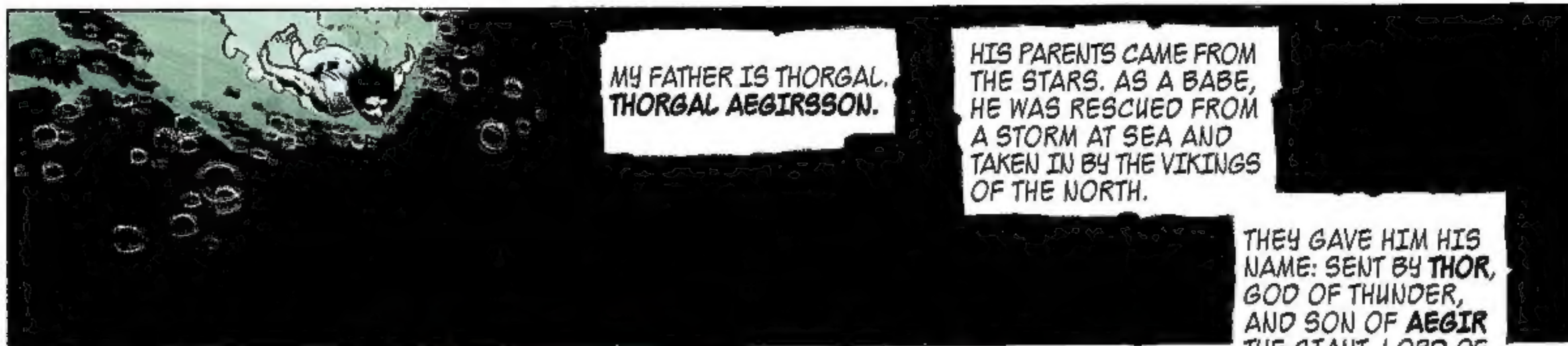
SCRIPT

THORGAL

The Blue Plague



COLOURS: GRAZA



MY FATHER IS THORGAL.
THORGAL AEGIRSSON.

HIS PARENTS CAME FROM
THE STARS. AS A BABE,
HE WAS RESCUED FROM
A STORM AT SEA AND
TAKEN IN BY THE VIKINGS
OF THE NORTH.

THEY GAVE HIM HIS
NAME: SENT BY THOR,
GOD OF THUNDER,
AND SON OF AEGIR
THE GIANT, LORD OF
THE SEA.



THORGAL REMAINED
WITH THE VIKINGS
UNTIL THE DAY HE
MARRIED PRINCESS
AARICIA.

HE'S THE STRONGEST
AND THE BRAVEST MAN
I KNOW. THE MOST STEAD-
FAST, TOO. AND THE BEST
ARCHER THAT EVER WAS.



I WISH I COULD
HAVE GROWN UP
TO BE LIKE HIM.



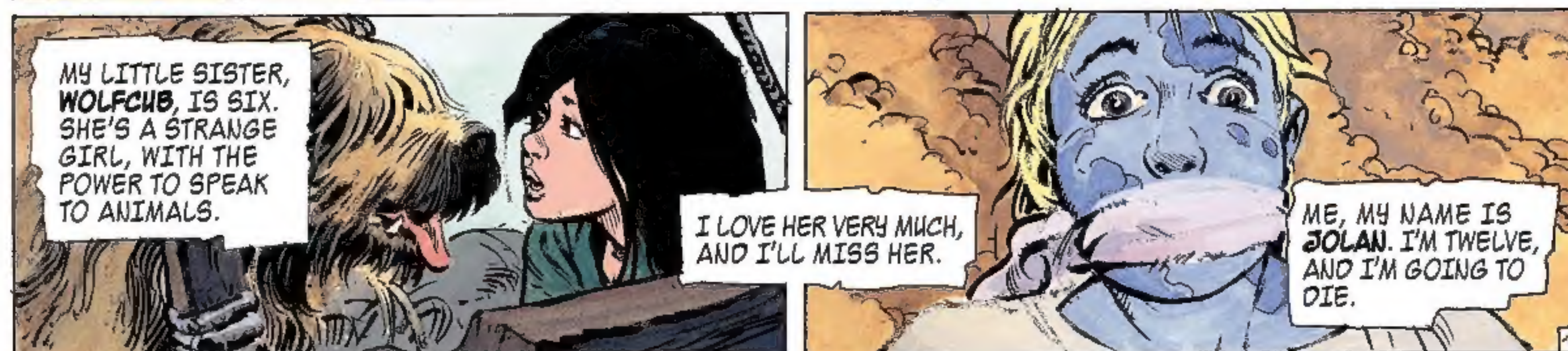
AARICIA, MY MOTHER, IS THE
DAUGHTER OF AN OLD KING OF
THE VIKINGS OF THE NORTH.
THORGAL AND SHE HAD LOVED
EACH OTHER SINCE THEY WERE
CHILDREN. AFTER GETTING
MARRIED, THEY LEFT NORTHLAND
TO GO AND LIVE ON A SMALL,
DESERTED ISLAND IN THE
GREY SEA.

THAT'S WHERE
WOLFCUB AND
I GREW UP.



AARICIA IS VERY BEAUTIFUL,
VERY GENTLE, AND ALSO
VERY BRAVE. SHE'S HAD TO
FACE MANY DANGERS, WITH
OR WITHOUT THORGAL, AND
SHE'S ALWAYS ENDURED.
WILL SHE ENDURE THIS
TIME AS WELL?

I HOPE SO - WITH
ALL MY HEART.



MY LITTLE SISTER,
WOLFCUB, IS SIX.
SHE'S A STRANGE
GIRL, WITH THE
POWER TO SPEAK
TO ANIMALS.

I LOVE HER VERY MUCH,
AND I'LL MISS HER.



ME, MY NAME IS
JOLAN. I'M TWELVE,
AND I'M GOING TO
DIE.

WE HAD LEFT OUR ISLAND NEVER TO GO BACK, AS TOO MANY PEOPLE KNEW OF IT. PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T ALWAYS MEAN US WELL, SUCH AS THAT BACK-STABBING KRISS OF VALNOR.

WE'D TAKEN MY TWO NEW FRIENDS WITH US: **DAREK THE SVEAR** AND HIS SISTER **LEHLA**. THEIR PARENTS WERE DEAD AND THEY'D COME TO LIVE WITH US.

I REALLY LIKE LEHLA.

ACTUALLY, I THINK I'M IN LOVE WITH HER. BUT I NEVER TOLD HER. I DIDN'T DARE.

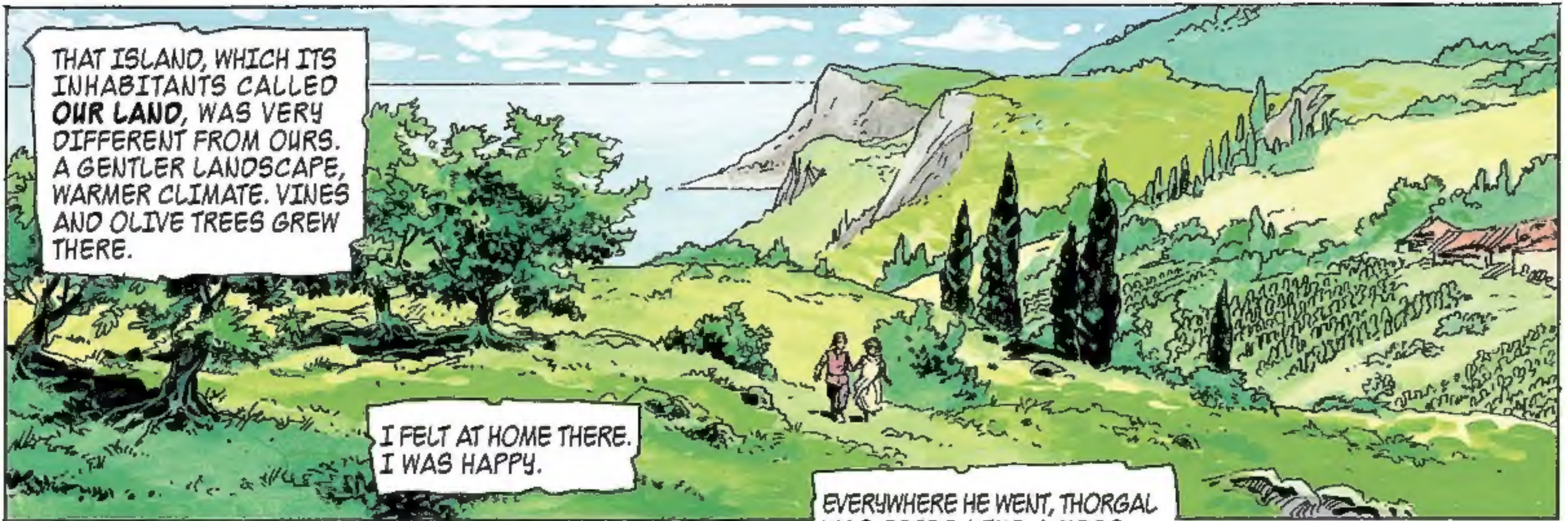
DURING A STORM, WOLFCUB FELL OVERBOARD.

THORGAL DIVED IN TO SAVE HER.

THEY MANAGED TO CLIMB ABOARD THE SECOND BOAT, WHILE THE REST OF US WERE CARRIED OFF BY THE FURY OF THE WAVES.

WE LOST SIGHT OF THEM, AND WE WERE SEPARATED FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

FORTUNATELY, AFTER DRIFTING AIMLESSLY ACROSS THE SEA, WE FOUND THEM ON AN ISLAND THEY'D WASHED UP ON LONG BEFORE US.

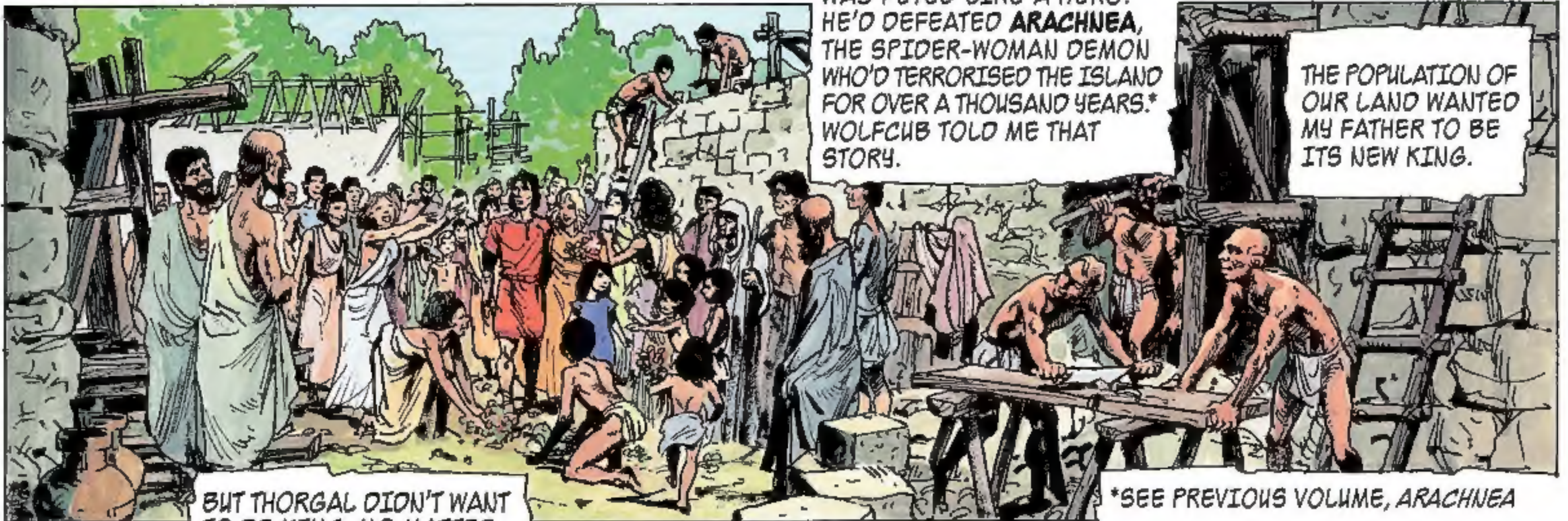


THAT ISLAND, WHICH ITS INHABITANTS CALLED **OUR LAND**, WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM OURS. A GENTLER LANDSCAPE, WARMER CLIMATE. VINES AND OLIVE TREES GREW THERE.

I FELT AT HOME THERE. I WAS HAPPY.

EVERYWHERE HE WENT, THORGAL WAS FETED LIKE A HERO. HE'D DEFEATED **ARACHNEA**, THE SPIDER-WOMAN DEMON WHO'D TERRORISED THE ISLAND FOR OVER A THOUSAND YEARS.* WOLFCHUB TOLD ME THAT STORY.

THE POPULATION OF OUR LAND WANTED MY FATHER TO BE ITS NEW KING.

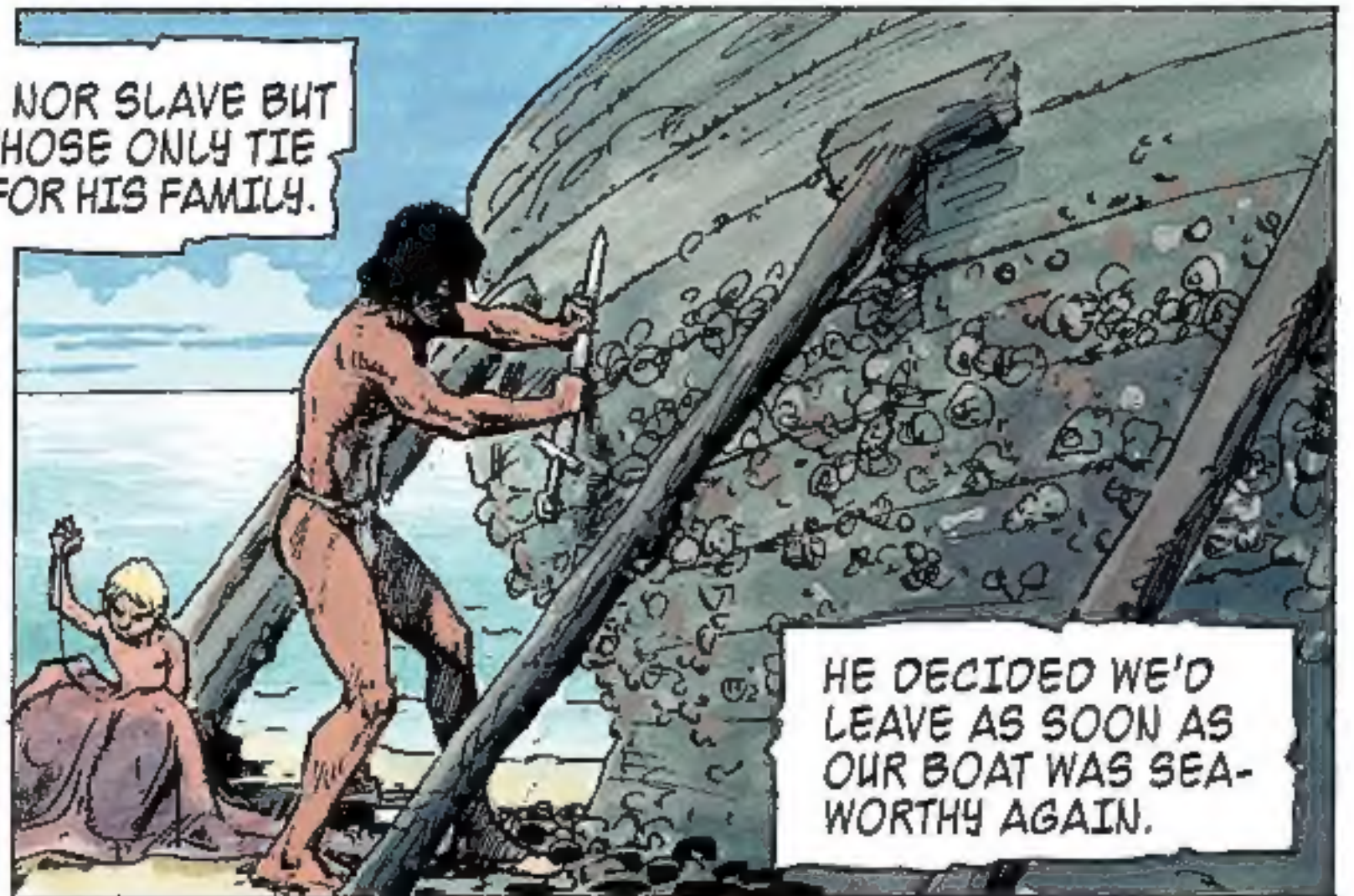


BUT THORGAL DIDN'T WANT TO BE KING, NO MATTER WHEN OR WHERE. A KING IS ALWAYS A SLAVE TO HIS SUBJECTS, HE SAID, AND HE WANTED TO BE NEITHER ONE NOR THE OTHER.

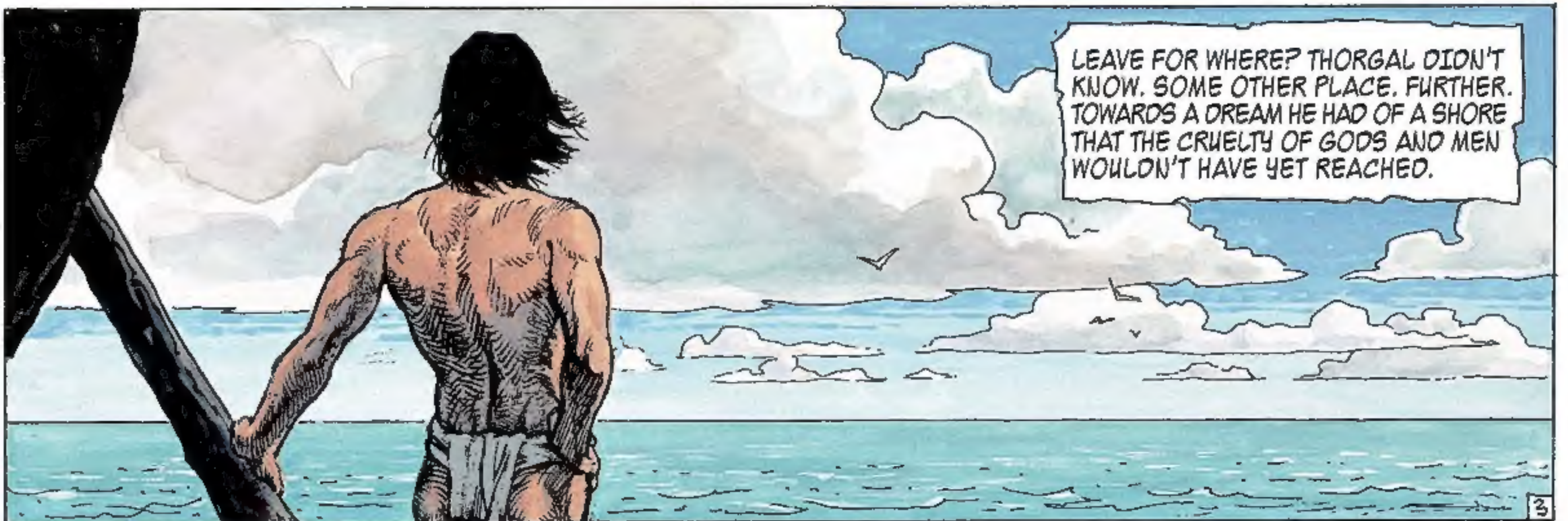
*SEE PREVIOUS VOLUME, **ARACHNEA**



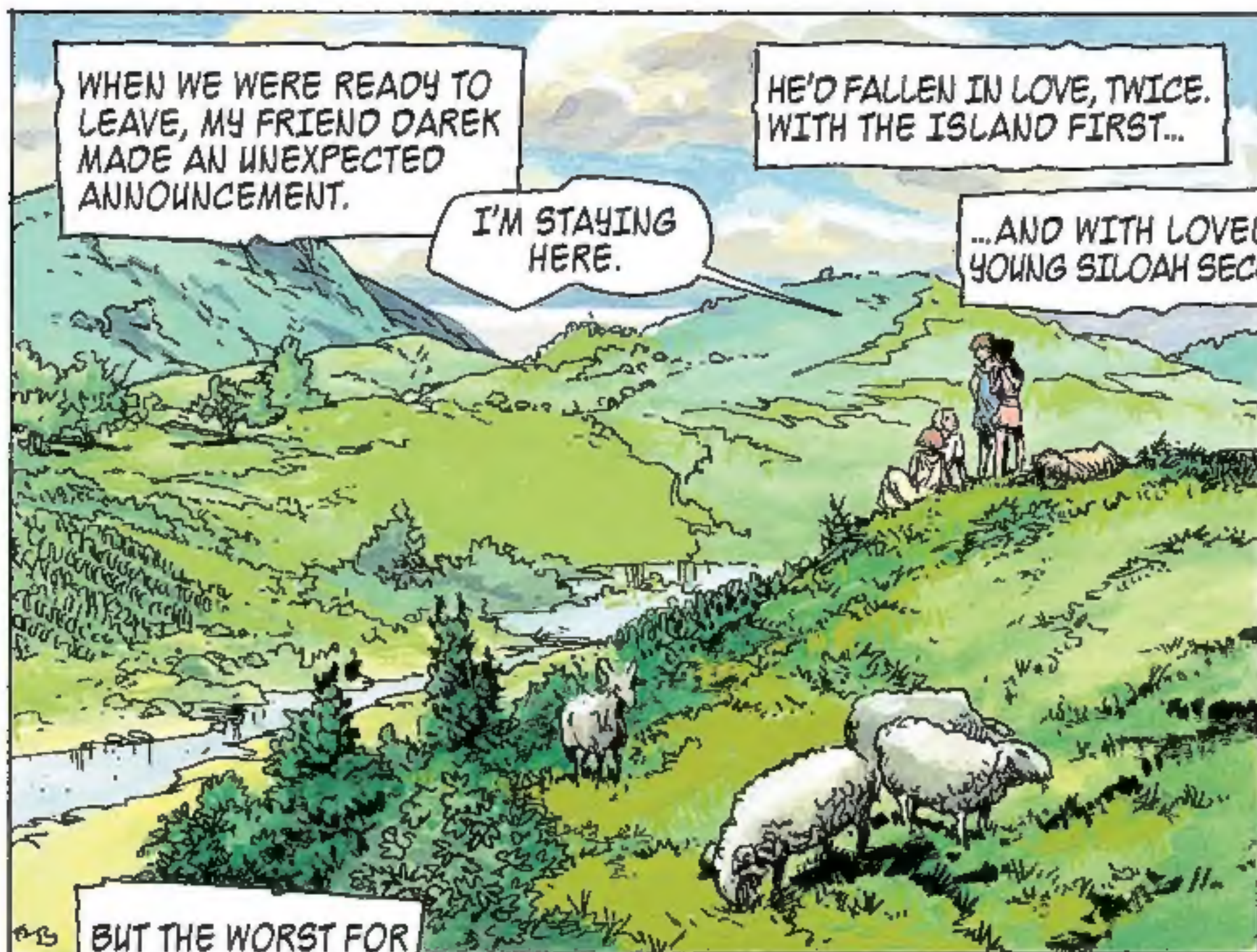
NEITHER KING NOR SLAVE BUT A FREE MAN, WHOSE ONLY TIE WAS HIS LOVE FOR HIS FAMILY.



HE DECIDED WE'D LEAVE AS SOON AS OUR BOAT WAS SEA-WORTHY AGAIN.



LEAVE FOR WHERE? THORGAL DIDN'T KNOW. SOME OTHER PLACE. FURTHER. TOWARDS A DREAM HE HAD OF A SHORE THAT THE CRUELTY OF GODS AND MEN WOULDN'T HAVE YET REACHED.



WHEN WE WERE READY TO LEAVE, MY FRIEND DAREK MADE AN UNEXPECTED ANNOUNCEMENT.

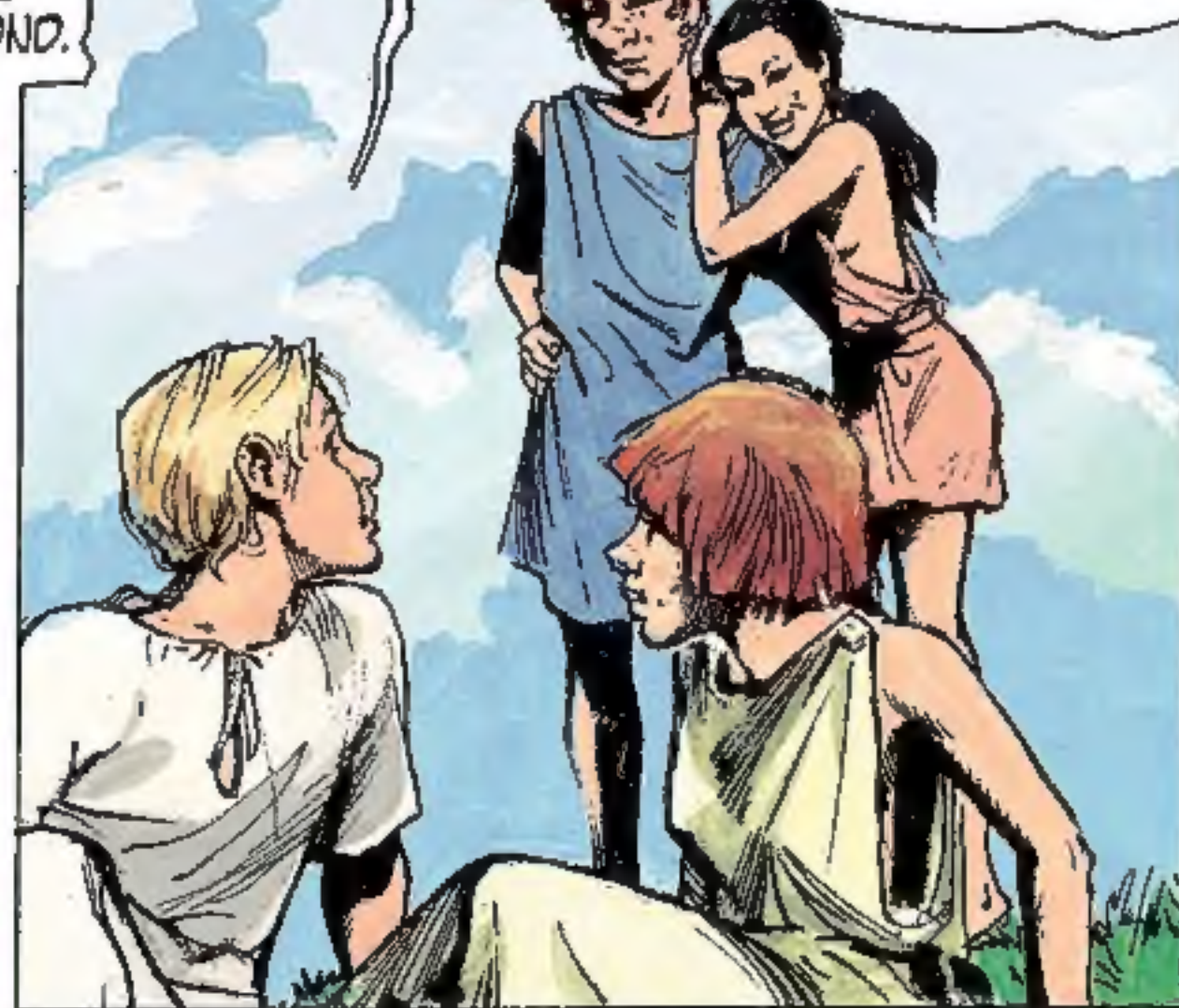
I'M STAYING HERE.

HE'D FALLEN IN LOVE, TWICE. WITH THE ISLAND FIRST...

...AND WITH LOVELY YOUNG SILOAH SECOND.

I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO EXPLORE THE WORLD, DAREK? TO HAVE GRAND, WONDERFUL ADVENTURES?

THE MOST WONDERFUL OF ADVENTURES IS SEIZING HAPPINESS WHEN YOU COME ACROSS IT, JOLAN. AND I FOUND IT HERE ON OUR LAND, WITH SILOAH.



BUT THE WORST FOR ME WAS LEHLA'S DECISION.

I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE MY BROTHER, JOLAN.

SUDDENLY I FELT A BIG LUMP IN MY THROAT. I COULDN'T SPEAK; I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO HER, ANYWAY.

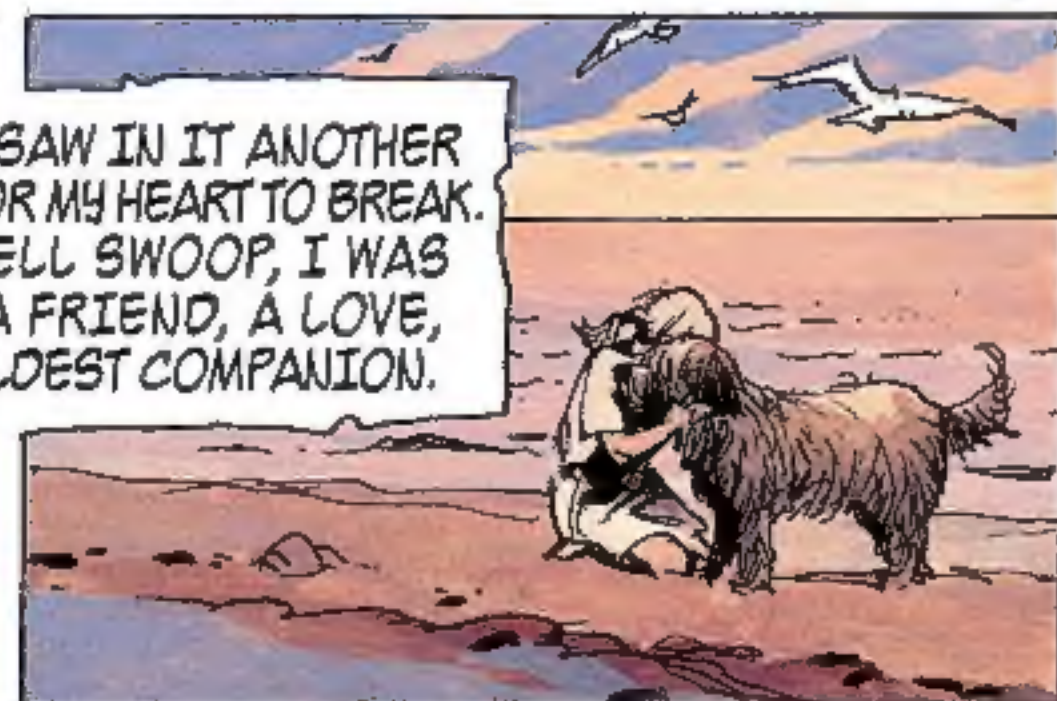


I KNOW YOU HAVE TO GO WITH THORGAL AND AARICIA, BUT LEAVE MUFF WITH US. HE'S TOO OLD TO TRAVEL NOW, AND HE HASN'T REALLY RECOVERED FROM HIS WOUNDS.

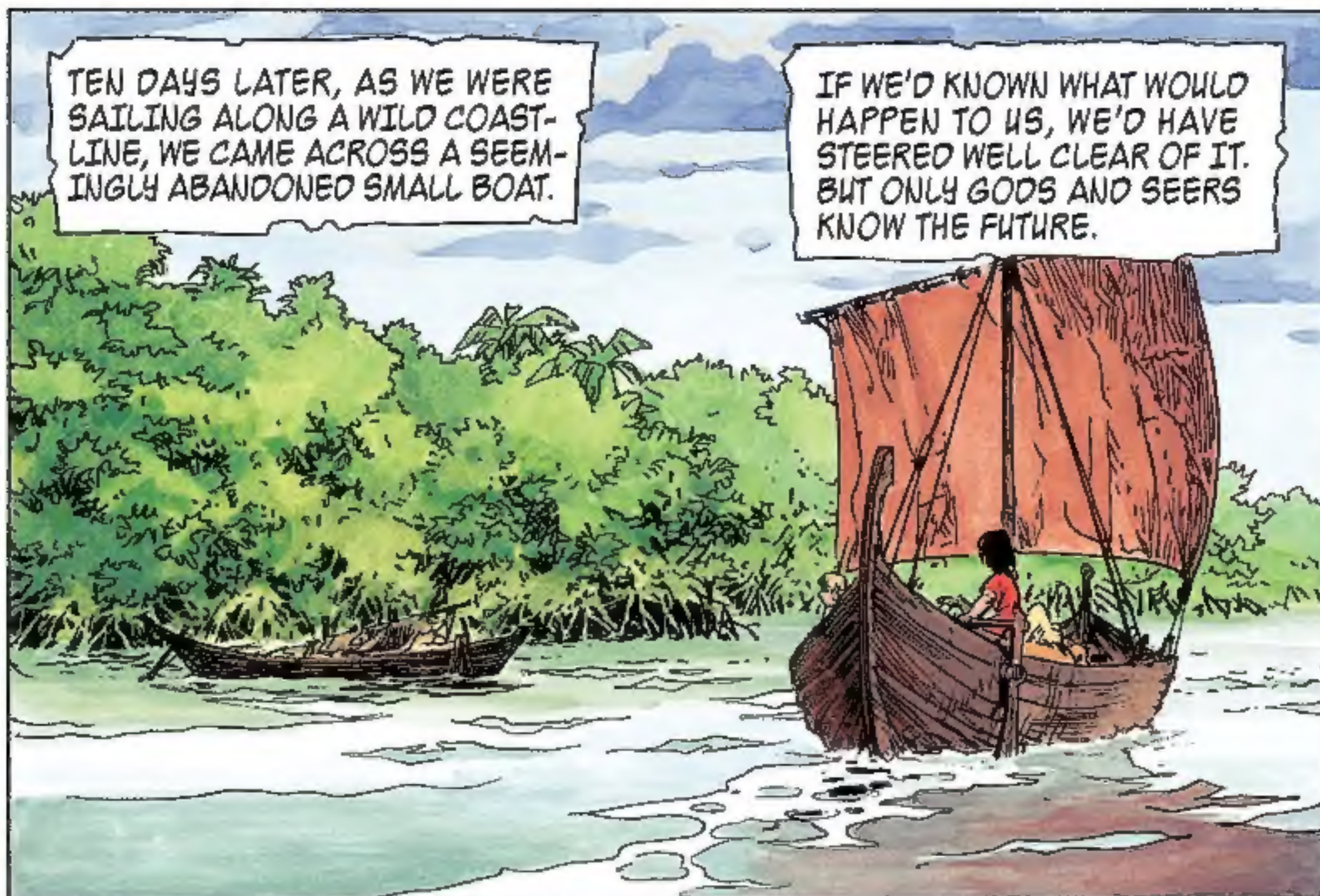
AND THAT WAY, YOU'LL HAVE ANOTHER REASON TO COME BACK HERE SOME DAY.



MOSTLY I SAW IN IT ANOTHER REASON FOR MY HEART TO BREAK. IN ONE FELL SWOOP, I WAS LOSING A FRIEND, A LOVE, AND MY OLDEST COMPANION.



WHEN OUR BOAT LEFT THE ISLAND THE NEXT MORNING, FILLED WITH SUPPLIES, I DIDN'T LOOK BACK FOR ONE LAST GOODBYE. I DIDN'T WANT LEHLA TO SEE ME CRY, NOT EVEN FROM AFAR.



TEN DAYS LATER, AS WE WERE SAILING ALONG A WILD COAST-LINE, WE CAME ACROSS A SEEM-
INGLY ABANDONED SMALL BOAT.

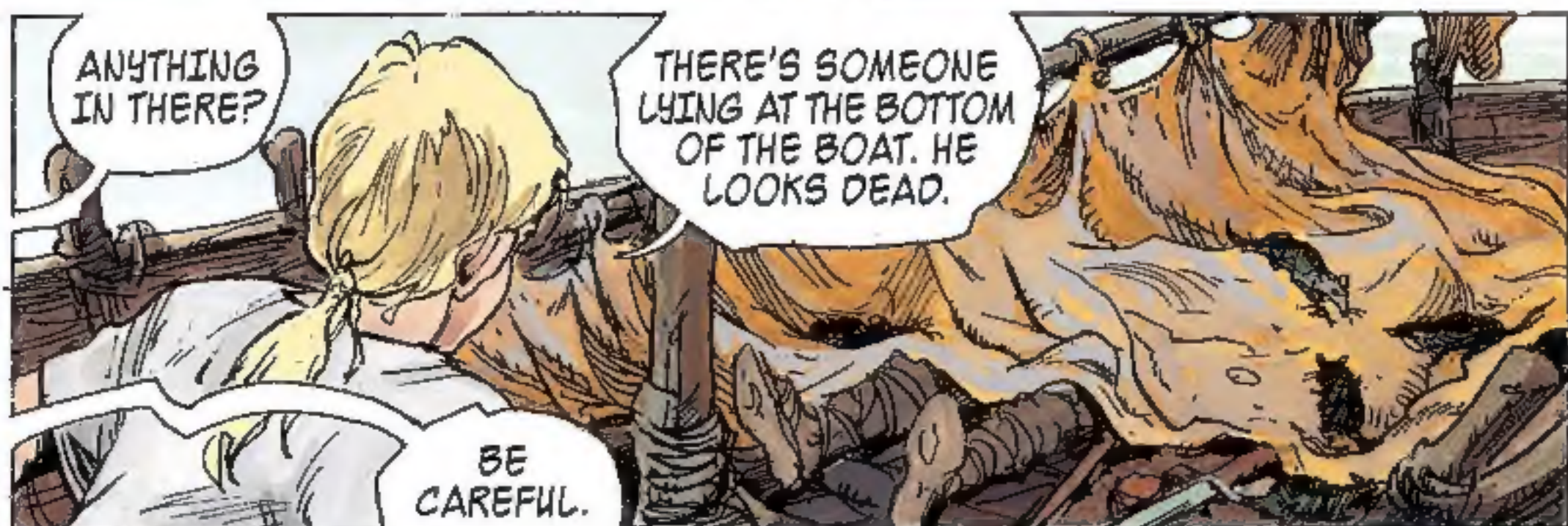
IF WE'D KNOWN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO US, WE'D HAVE STEERED WELL CLEAR OF IT. BUT ONLY GODS AND SEERS KNOW THE FUTURE.

JOLAN, TAKE THE TILL-
ER AND BRING US
ALONGSIDE. I'LL GO
AND HAVE A LOOK.

NO, I'LL GO.
THAT BOAT'S
EMPTY. I'M
PERFECTLY
SAFE.



I'D HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF
BREAKING BOTH MY LEGS
RATHER THAN JUMPING
INTO THAT STUPID BOAT.



ANYTHING
IN THERE?

THERE'S SOMEONE
LYING AT THE BOTTOM
OF THE BOAT. HE
LOOKS DEAD.

BE
CAREFUL.



OW!!

JOLAN, WHAT
HAPPENED?



I GOT BITTEN BY A RAT.
LET'S PUSH AWAY BEFORE
THOSE VERMIN JUMP
OVER.

AND THE
MAN?

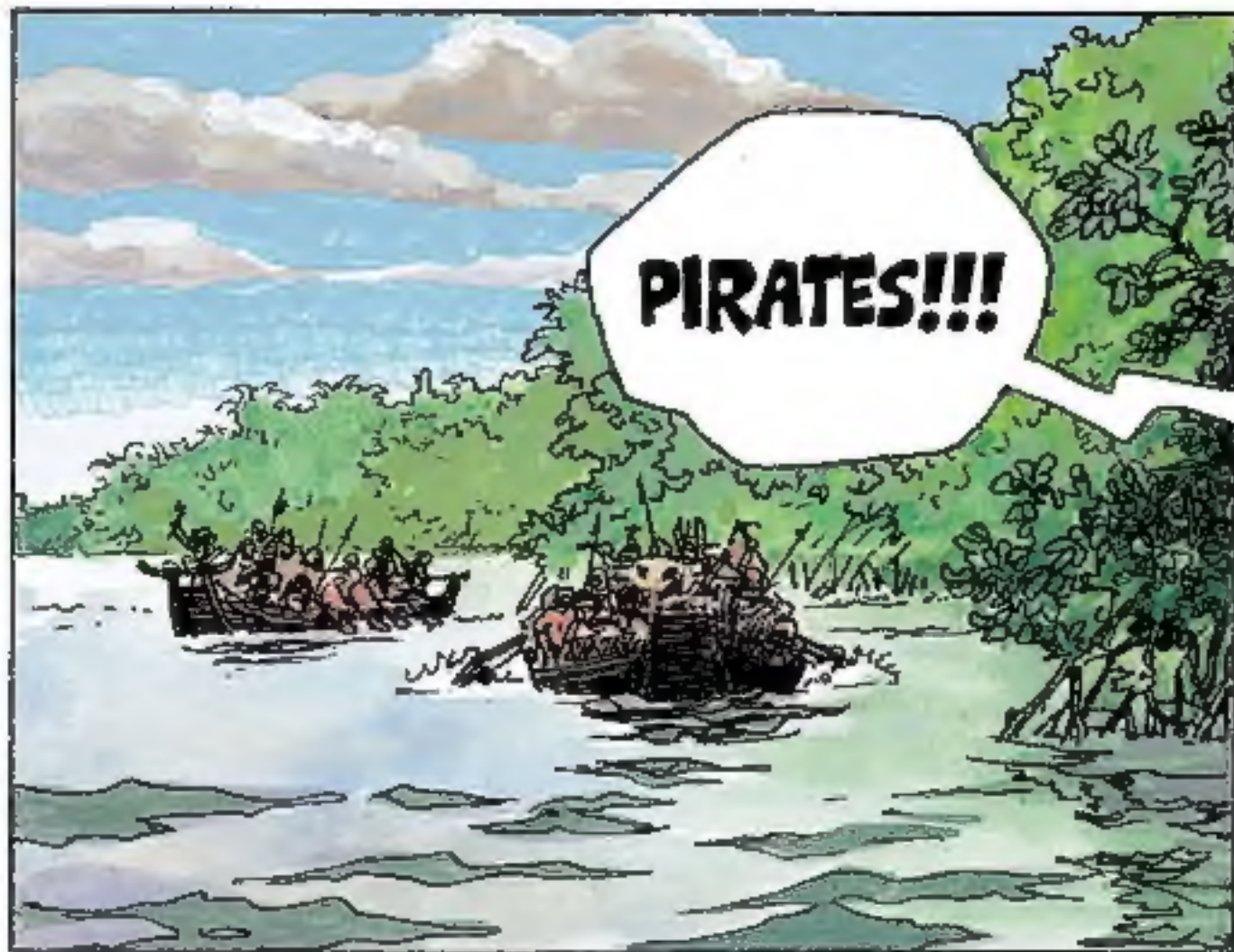
HE'S
DEAD.



TSHAK

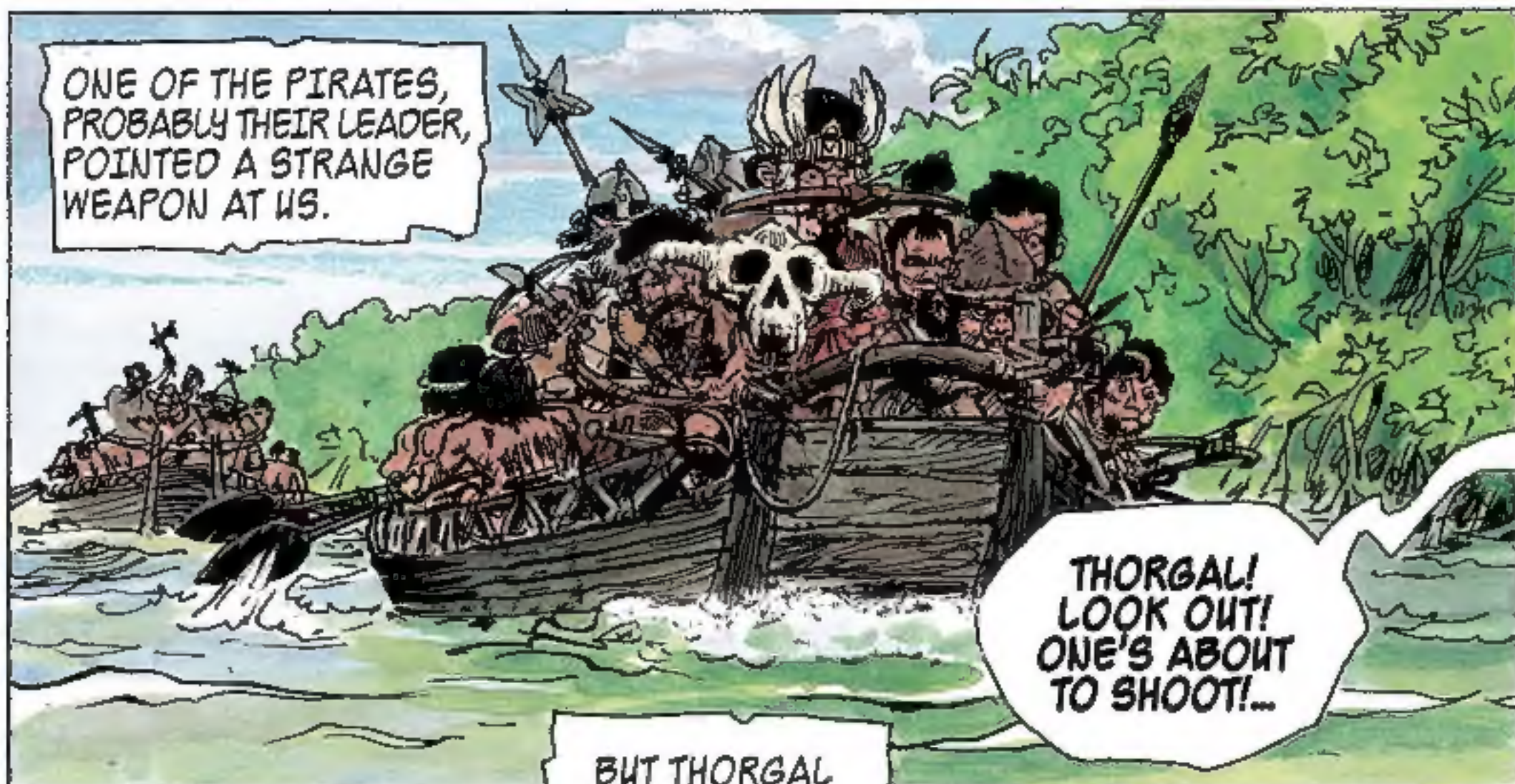
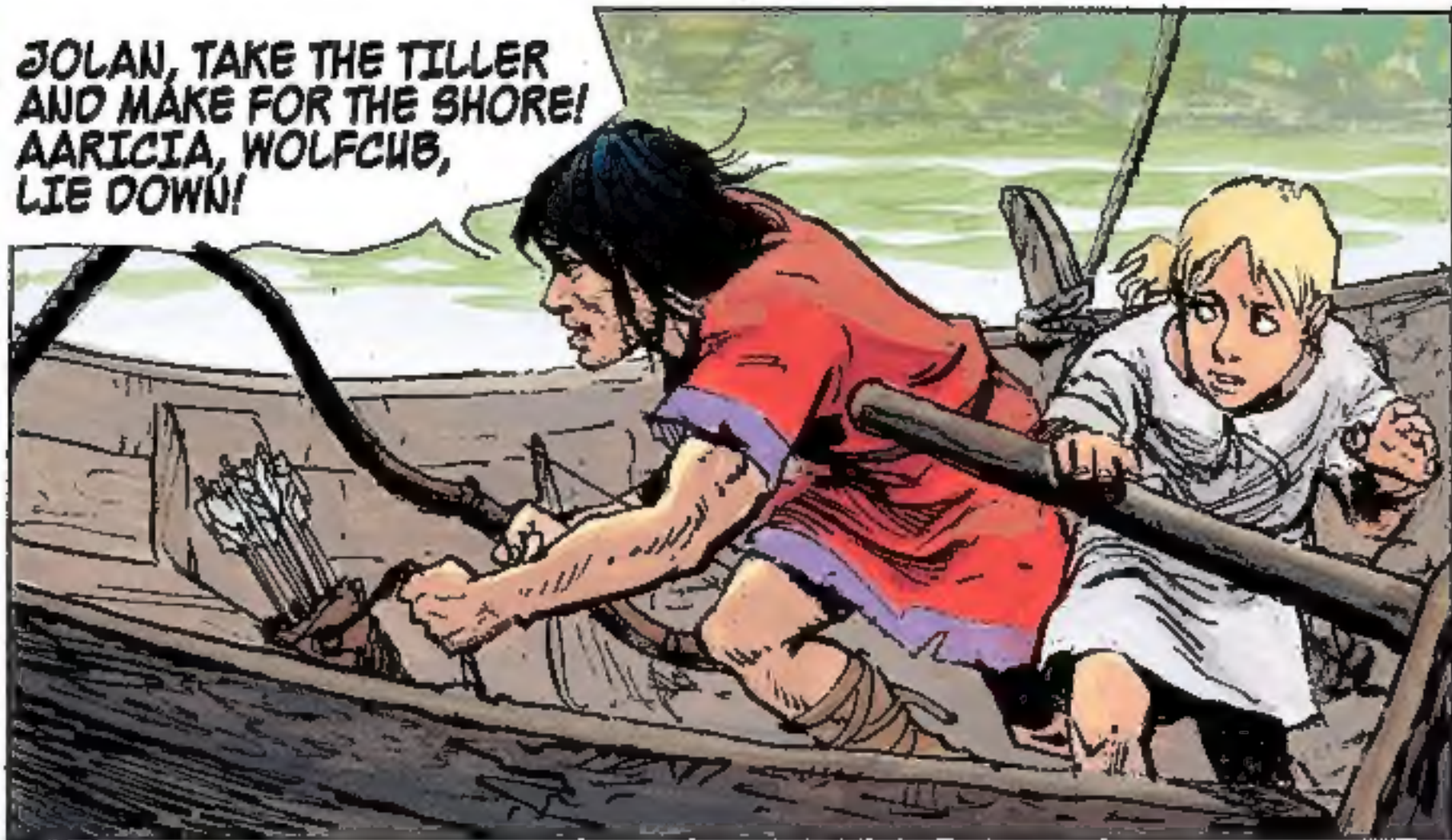
BUT OUR TROUBLES
WERE ONLY JUST
STARTING...

5



PIRATES!!!

JOLAN, TAKE THE TILLER AND MAKE FOR THE SHORE! AARICIA, WOLFCUB, LIE DOWN!



ONE OF THE PIRATES, PROBABLY THEIR LEADER, POINTED A STRANGE WEAPON AT US.

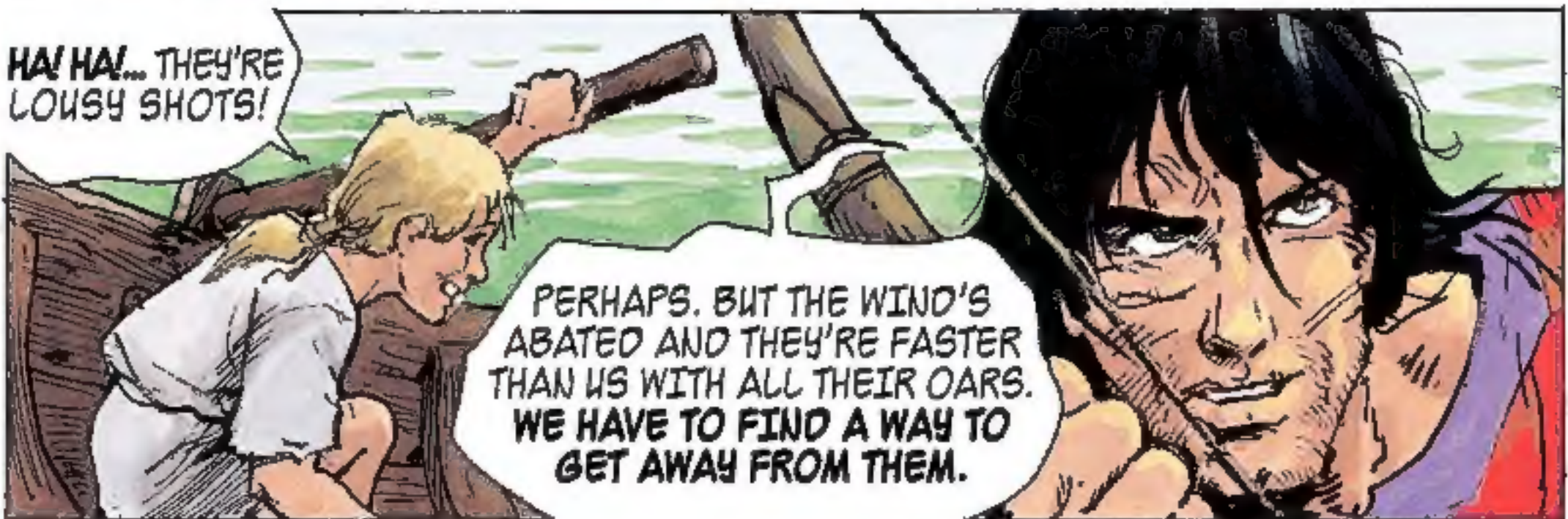
THORGAL! LOOK OUT! ONE'S ABOUT TO SHOOT!...

BUT THORGAL WAS FASTER, AS ALWAYS.



NICE SHOT, THORGAL!

LOOK OUT - THEY'RE FIRING BACK... TAKE COVER!



HA! HA!... THEY'RE LOUSY SHOTS!

PERHAPS. BUT THE WIND'S ABATED AND THEY'RE FASTER THAN US WITH ALL THEIR OARS. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO GET AWAY FROM THEM.



THERE!... AN OPENING!...



IN THERE?!

IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE. THEIR ROWERS WILL HAVE A HARDER TIME MANOEUVRING.

SO WILL WE.

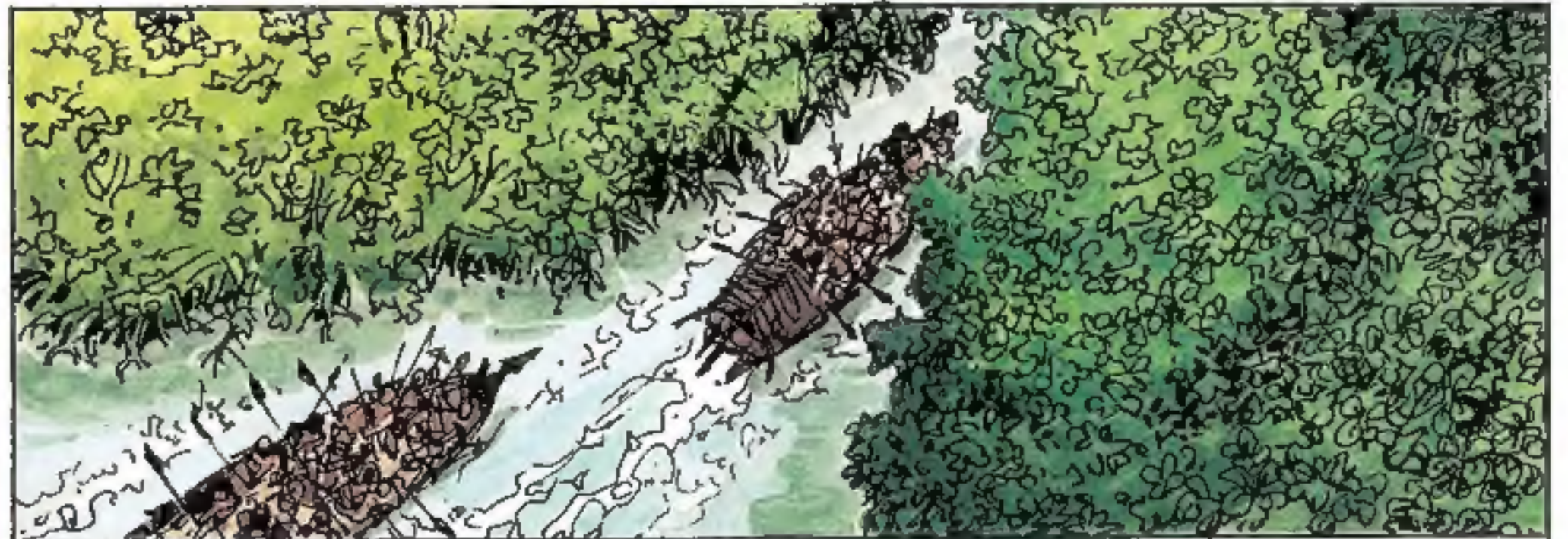
WE DON'T HAVE A CHOICE. LET AARICIA TAKE OVER AND MAN THE OARS.



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WHY ARE THEY AFTER US? SURELY THEY CAN GUESS WE'RE NOT CARRYING ANYTHING VALUABLE.

WE'RE PROBABLY THE VALUABLE COM-MODITIES IN THEIR EYES. I DON'T WANT US TO END UP SOLD AS SLAVES IN THE LOCAL MARKET.



LEFT. THERE'S A PASSAGE.

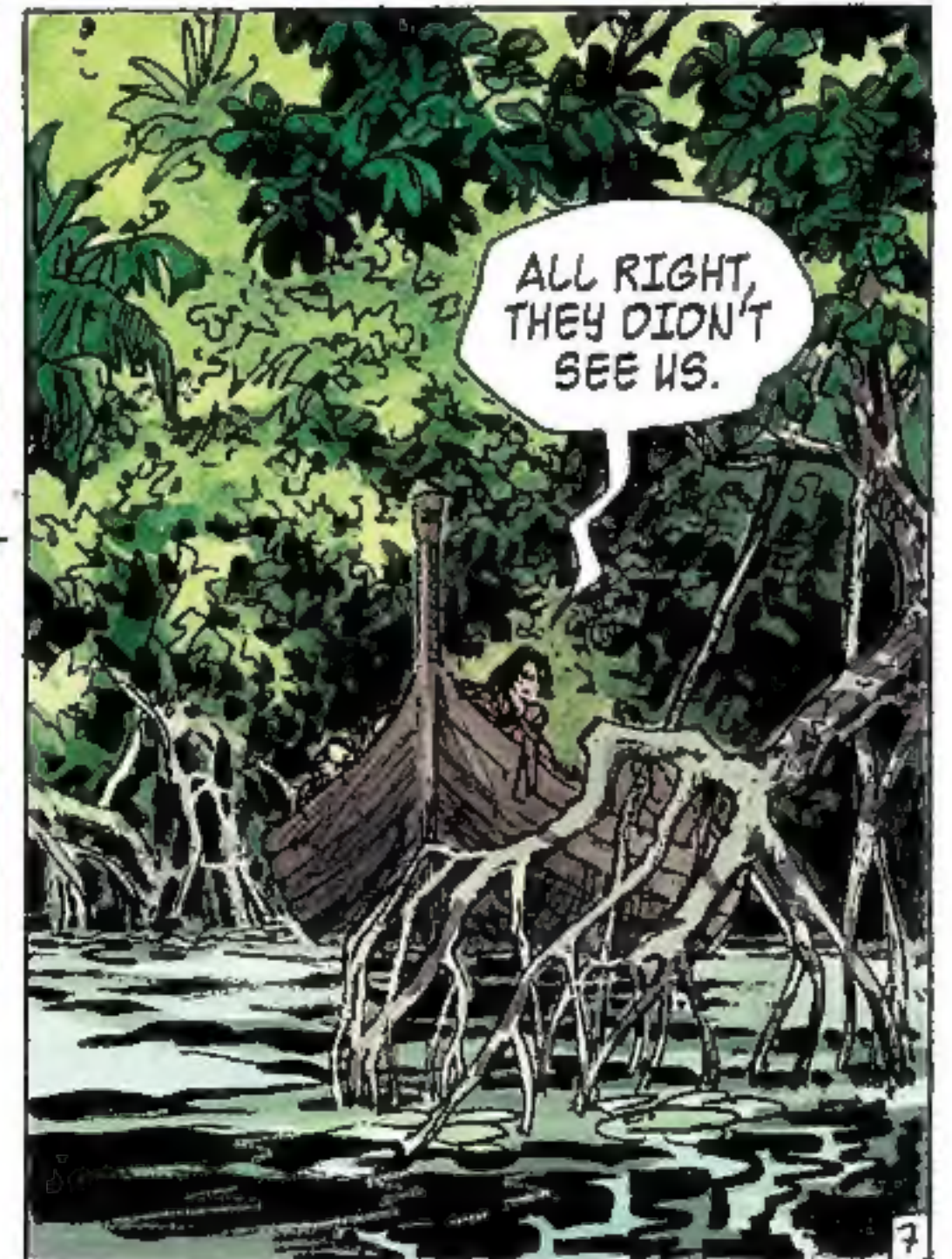
BUT...

DO AS I SAY: TURN LEFT!



THORGAL!... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO HIDE. WE'LL WORRY ABOUT MAKING A NEW MAST LATER, ONCE WE'RE OUT OF HARM'S WAY.



ALL RIGHT, THEY DIDN'T SEE US.



WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

WE WAIT UNTIL OUR PURSUERS GET TIRED. THEN WE'LL TRY AND MAKE IT TO SOLID GROUND, TO REPAIR THE MAST AND RESTOCK OUR WATER AND SUPPLIES.



WE SHOULD TEND TO THIS BITE BEFORE IT GETS INFECTED.

BAH! A LITTLE SALT-WATER WILL DO THE TRICK. THAT RODENT DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO BITE DEEP.



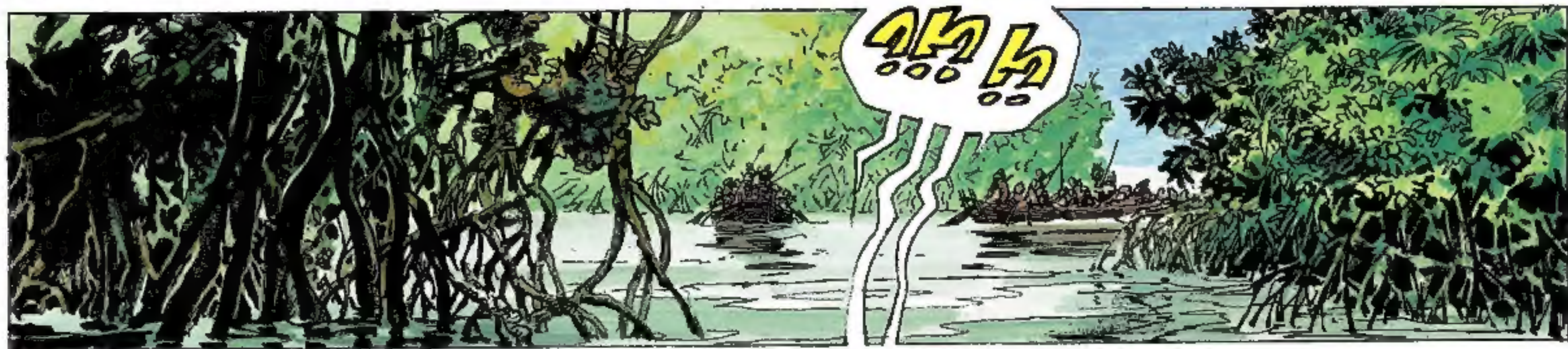
I WONDER WHAT THAT POOR DEVIL IN THE BOAT DIED OF. HIS SKIN WAS ALL BLUE AND HIS FACE TWISTED IN PAIN.

WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER KNOW - AND THAT'S FINE BY ME.



A FEW HOURS LATER WE RESUMED OUR DIFFICULT PROGRESSION. THE ONLY SOUND WAS THE FAINT SLAP OF OUR OARS ENTERING THE WATER. THERE WEREN'T EVEN ANY BIRD CALLS TO HEAR IN THAT STRANGE MAZE.

GRADUALLY THE VEGETATION CLEARED AND WE WERE HOPING WE WOULD AT LAST REACH DRY LAND WHEN SUDDENLY...



!!!



INTO THE WATER!

Wizzz
Wizzz
Wizzz

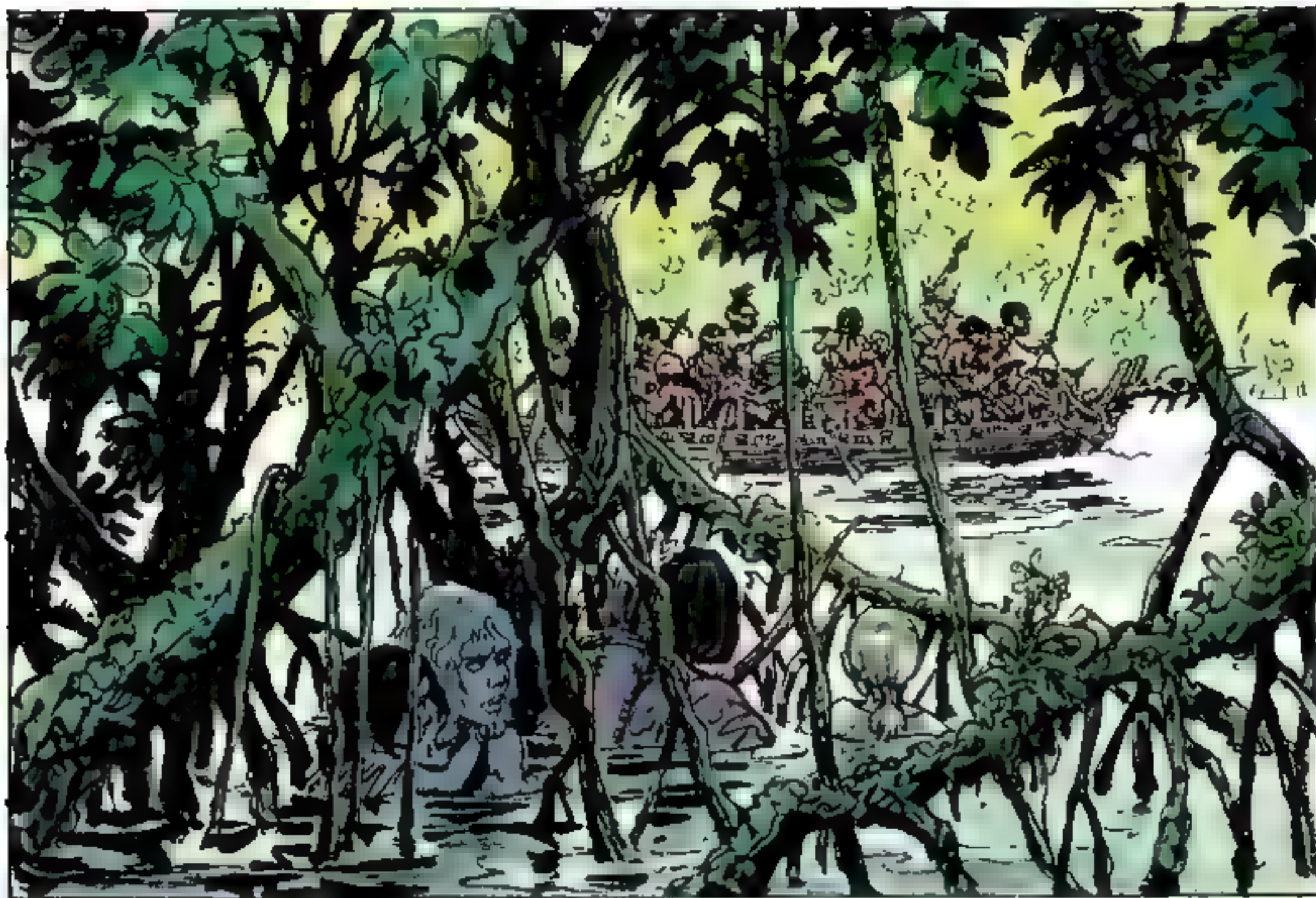


K14234KZ:10
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KEEP GOING AND HIDE. I'LL HOLD THEM BACK.

NO, PLEASE, NO, STAY WITH US! STAY WITH US!...



DID YOU SEE? THEY'RE
MIDGETS! THEY'RE
MIDGET PIRATES!!

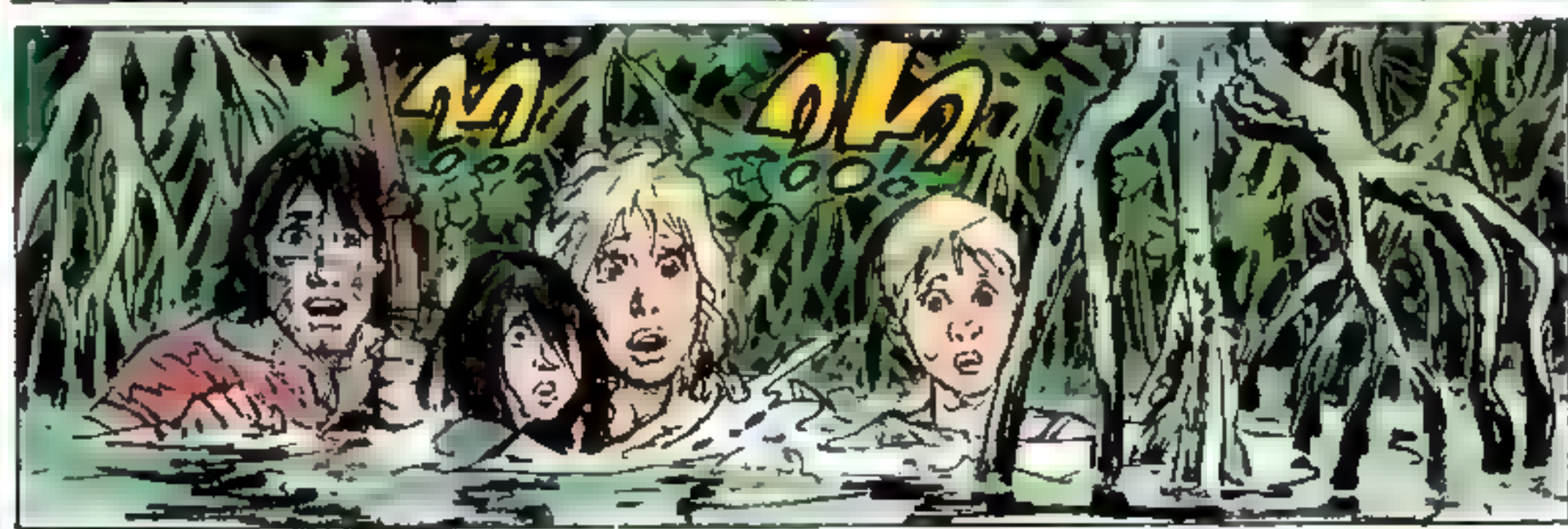


SHHH...
BE QUIET!



THEY SPOTTED
US! THIS WAY,
HURRY!

+ 27h52H
3922 > !

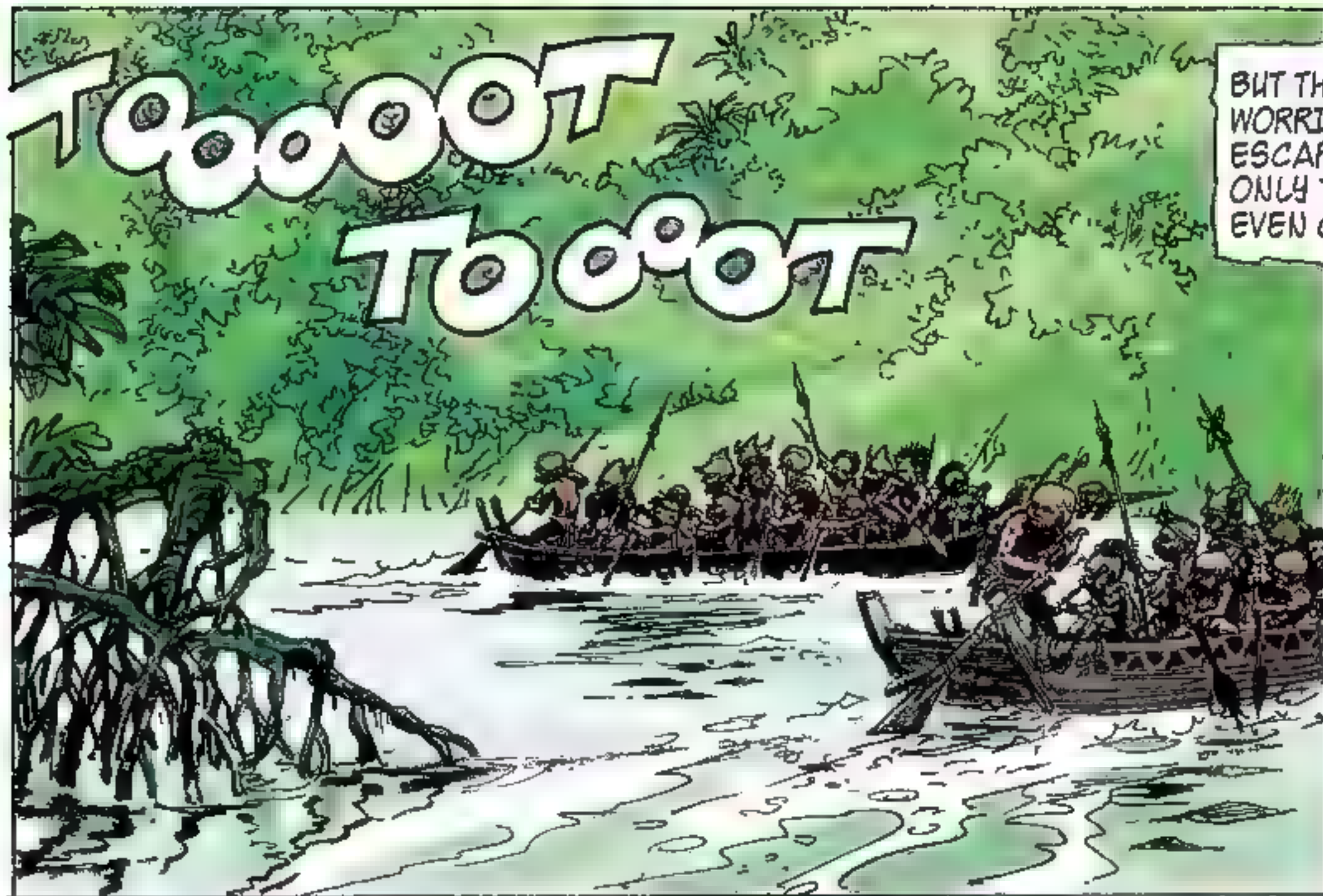


AT THAT POINT, ONLY
A MIRACLE COULD
HAVE SAVED US.



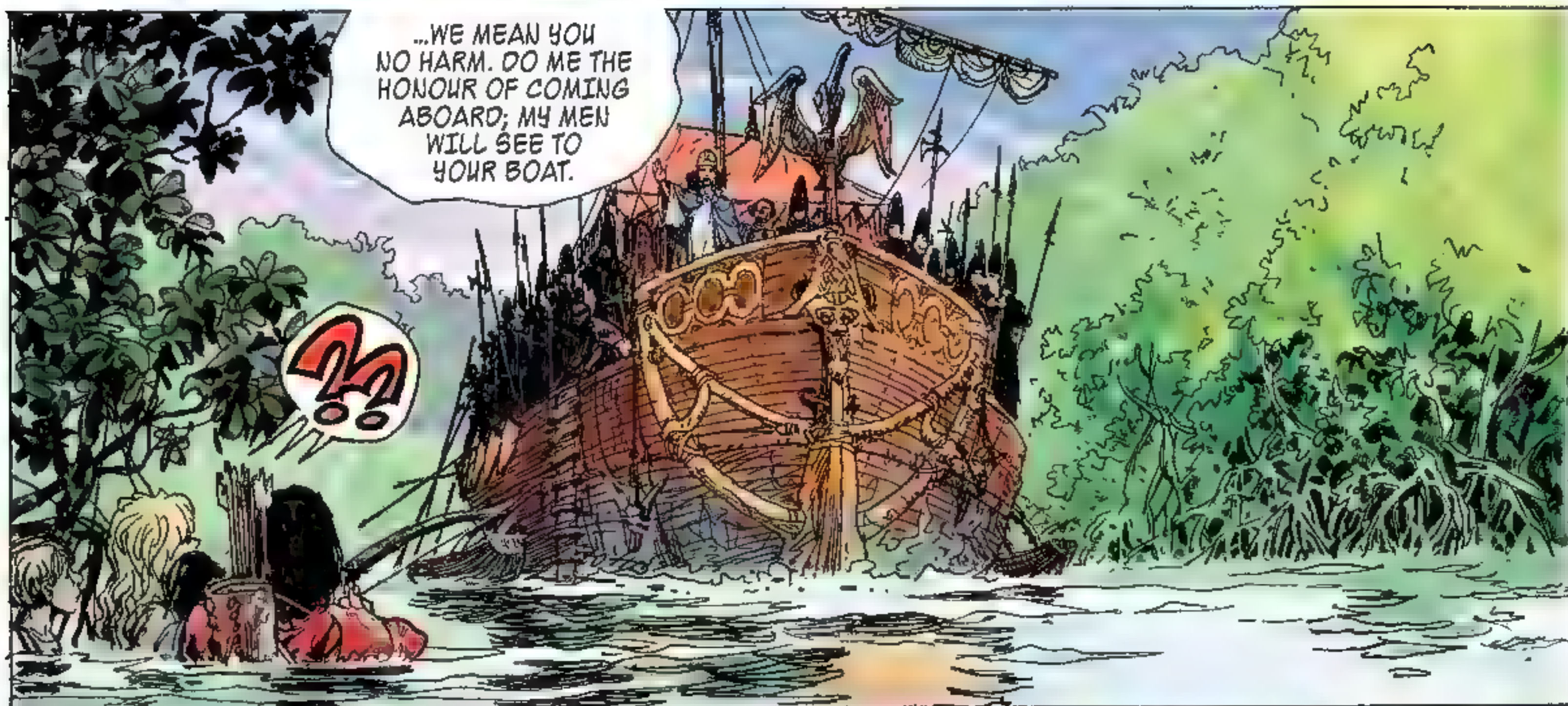
TooooooT

AND THE
MIRACLE
CAME...



BUT THORGAL WAS STILL WORRIED. HAD WE PERHAPS ESCAPED ONE DANGER ONLY TO FALL INTO AN EVEN GREATER ONE?

YOU CAN PUT YOUR BOW AWAY, STRANGER...



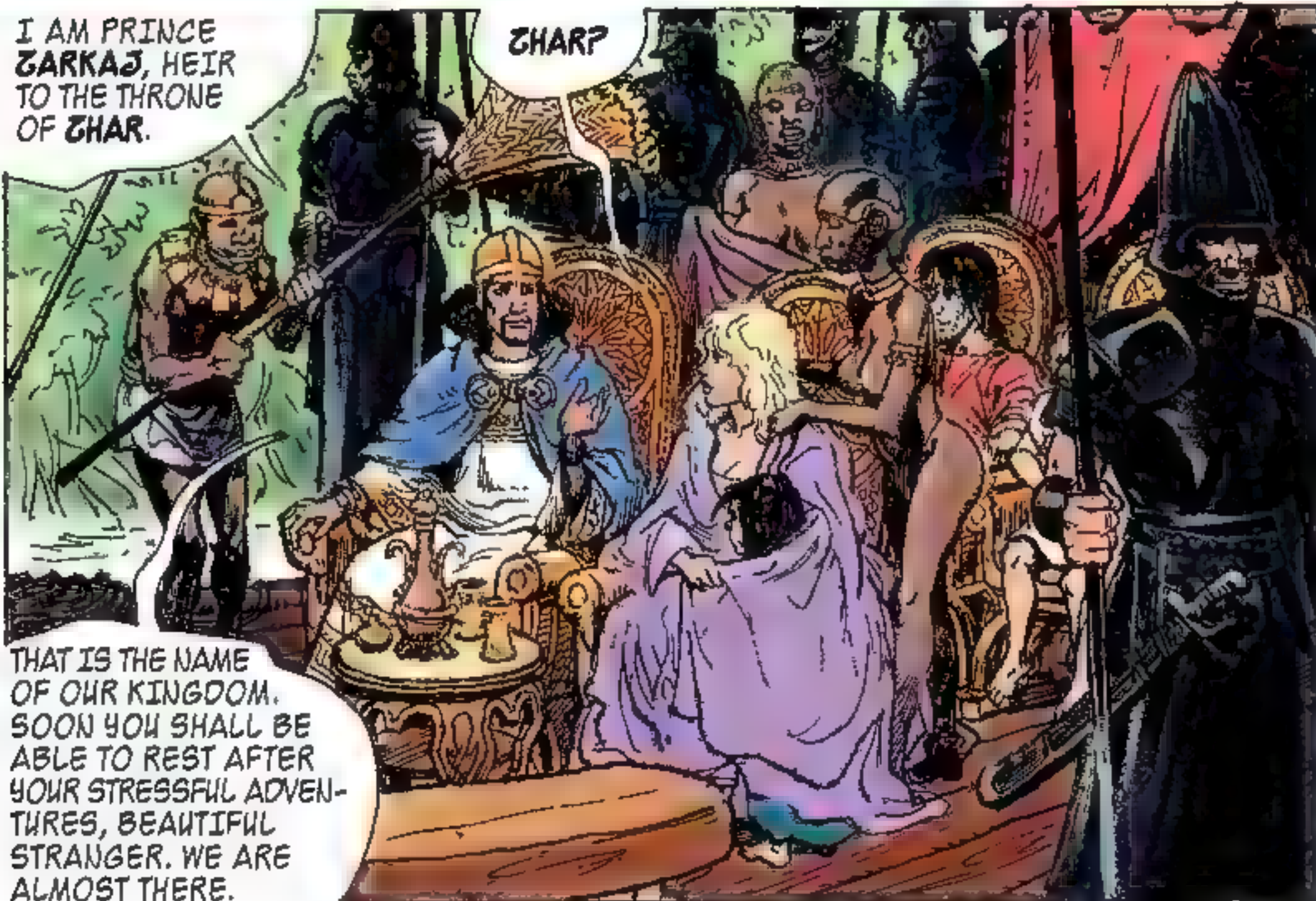
...WE MEAN YOU NO HARM. DO ME THE HONOUR OF COMING ABOARD; MY MEN WILL SEE TO YOUR BOAT.



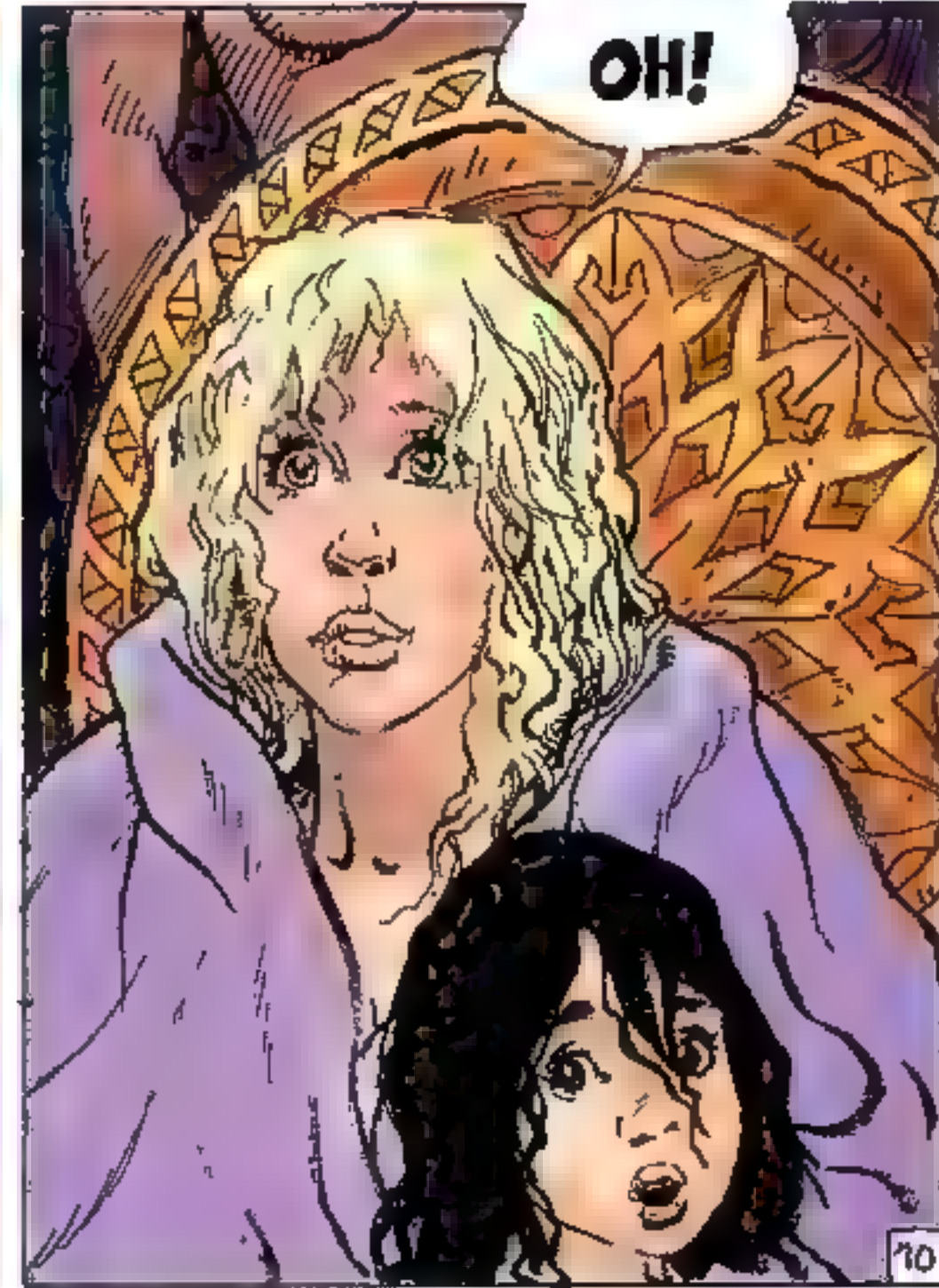
I AM PRINCE ZARKAJ, HEIR TO THE THRONE OF ZHAR.

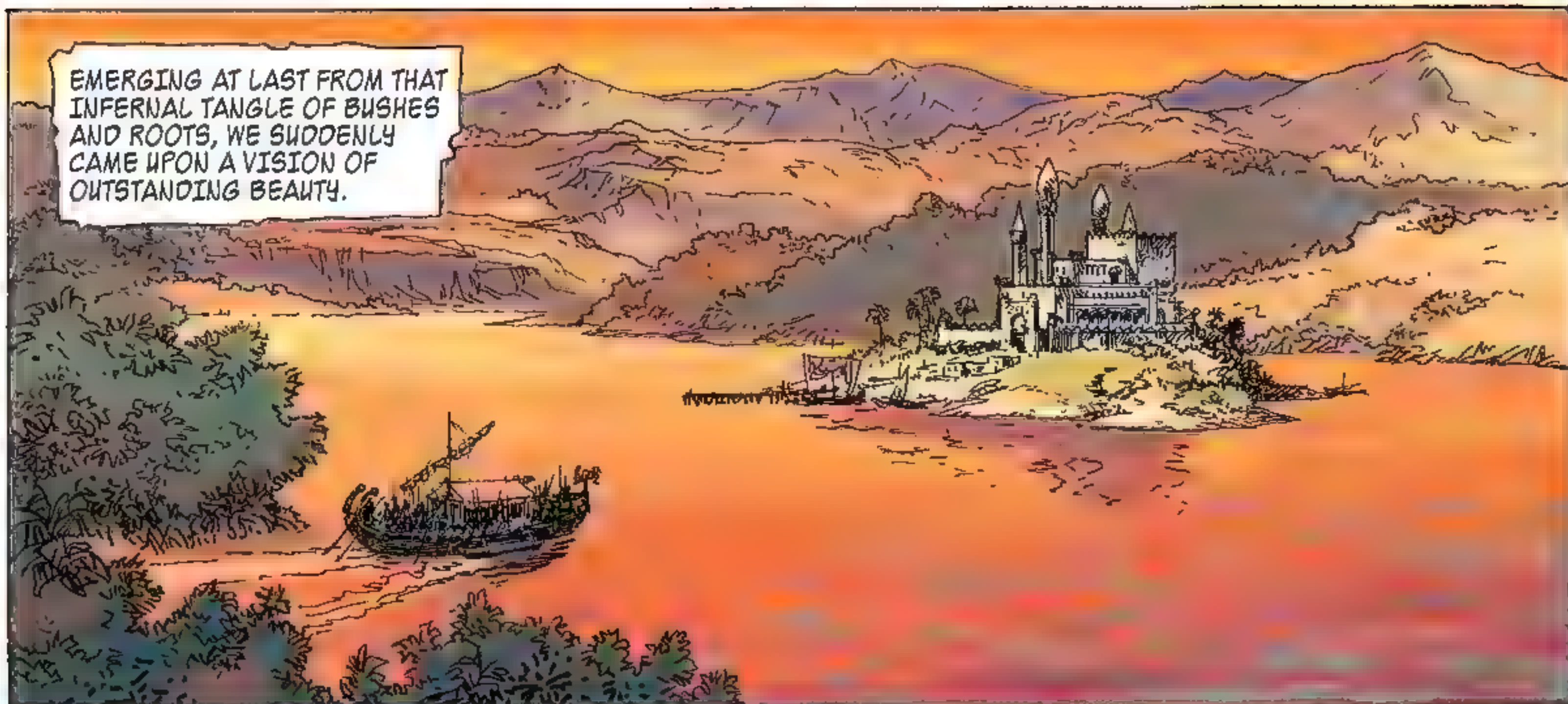
ZHAR?

THAT IS THE NAME OF OUR KINGDOM. SOON YOU SHALL BE ABLE TO REST AFTER YOUR STRESSFUL ADVENTURES, BEAUTIFUL STRANGER. WE ARE ALMOST THERE.

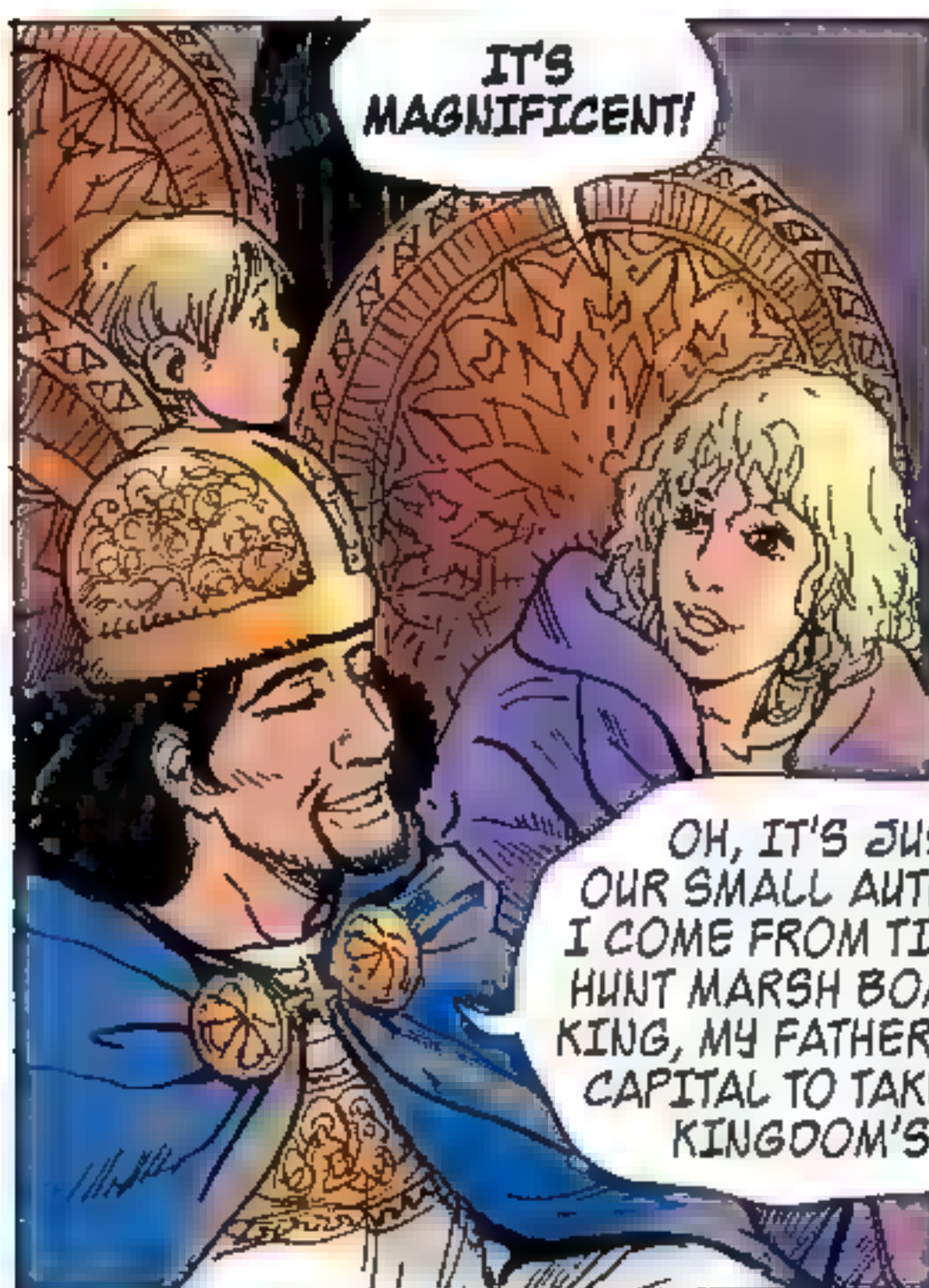


OH!





EMERGING AT LAST FROM THAT INFERNAL TANGLE OF BUSHES AND ROOTS, WE SUDDENLY CAME UPON A VISION OF OUTSTANDING BEAUTY.



IT'S MAGNIFICENT!

OH, IT'S JUST ONE OF OUR SMALL AUTUMN PALACES. I COME FROM TIME TO TIME TO HUNT MARSH BOARS WHILE THE KING, MY FATHER, STAYS IN OUR CAPITAL TO TAKE CARE OF THE KINGDOM'S AFFAIRS.

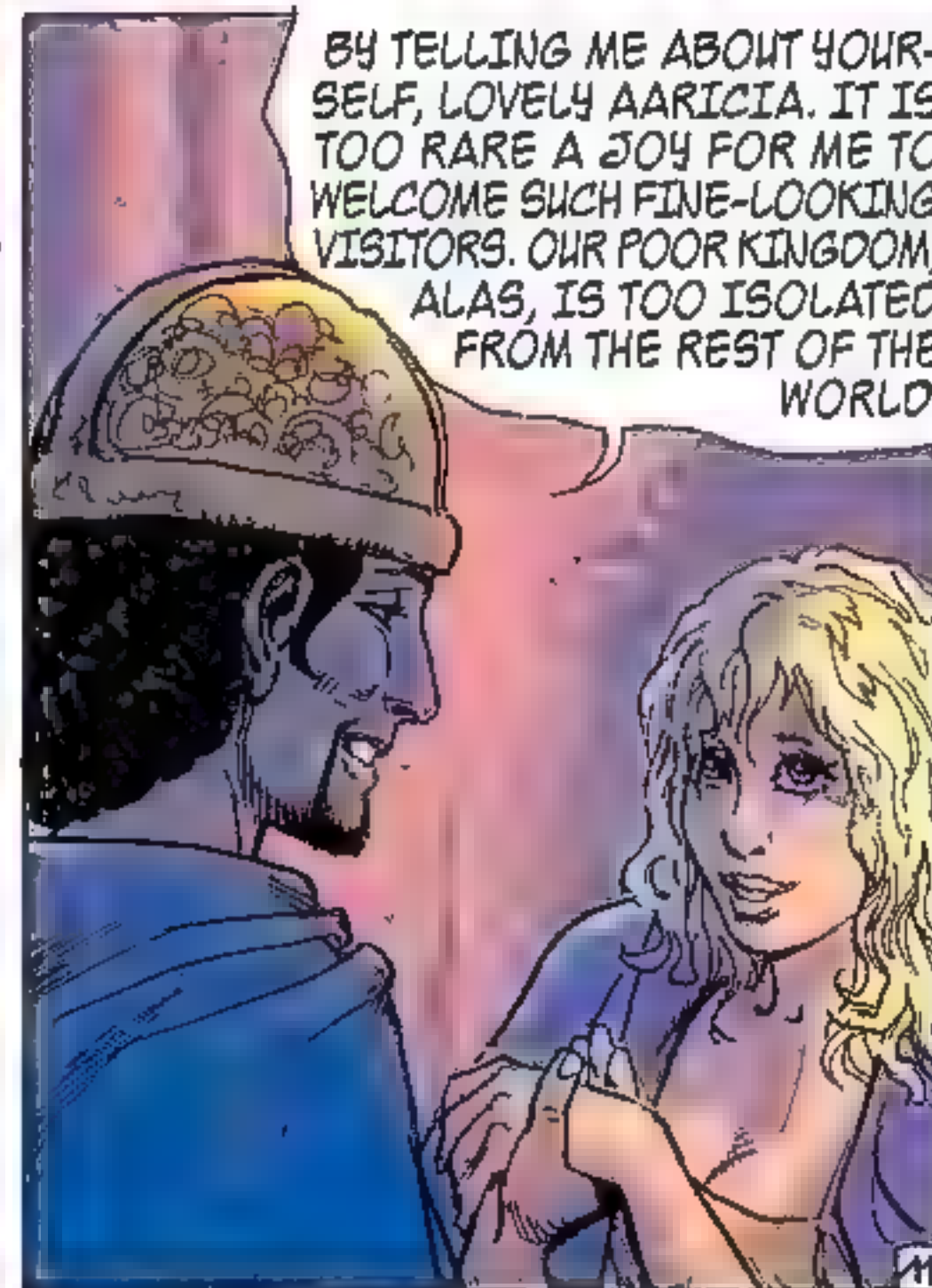


YOU CAN REST HERE FOR AS LONG AS YOU WISH BEFORE SAILING ON. MY CARPENTERS WILL REPAIR YOUR MAST AND REFIT YOUR BOAT, AND MY COOKS WILL PREPARE TRAVELLING SUPPLIES.

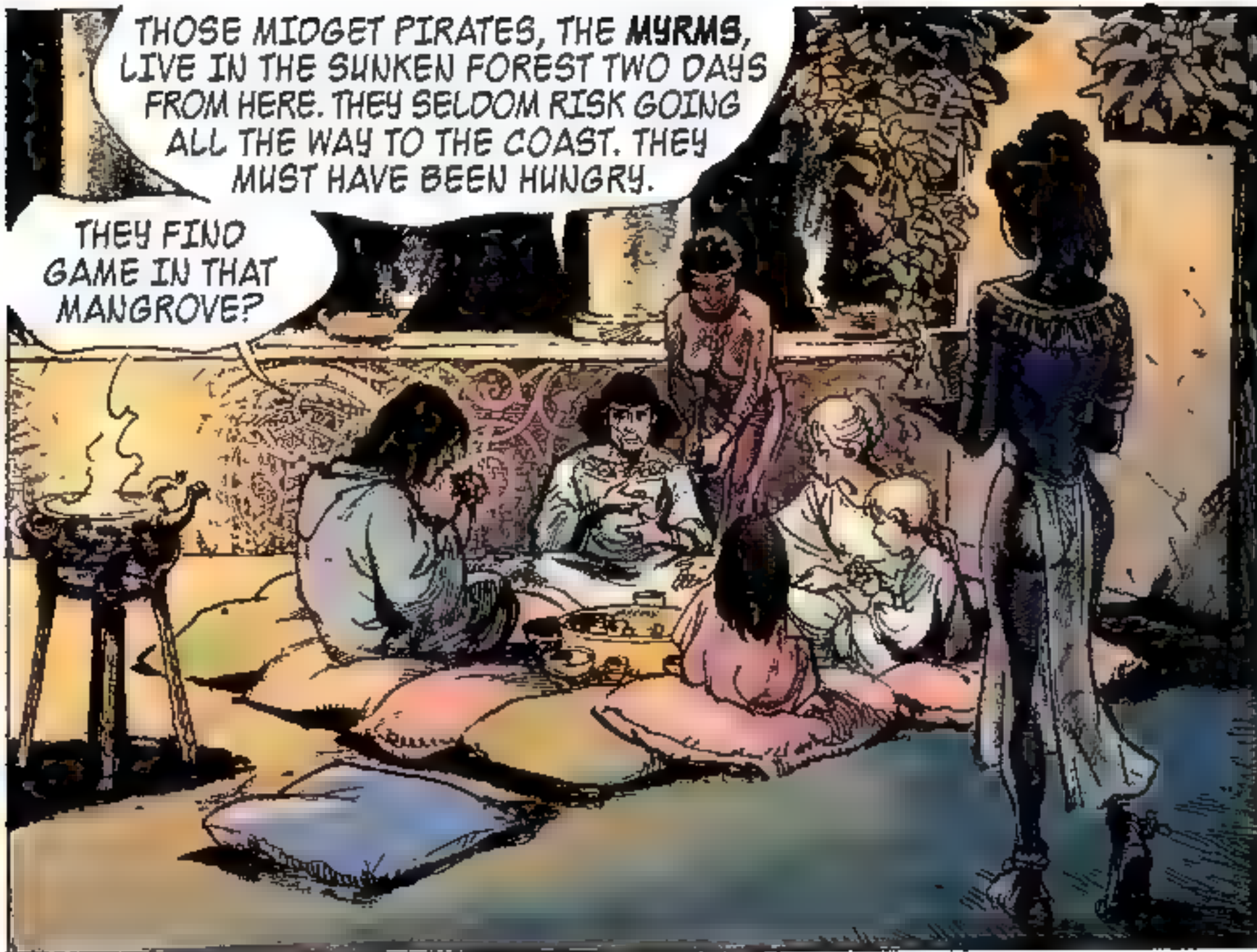
CONSIDER YOURSELVES AT HOME. MY PERSONAL MAIDS WILL PREPARE A SCENTED BATH AND DRY CLOTHES FOR YOU. THEN, IF YOU'RE WILLING, YOU WILL DINE IN MY COMPANY BEFORE TAKING THE REST THAT YOU NO DOUBT NEED.



I MUST BE LIVING A DREAM, PRINCE ZARKAJ. HOW CAN I THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR KINDNESS?



BY TELLING ME ABOUT YOURSELF, LOVELY AARICIA. IT IS TOO RARE A JOY FOR ME TO WELCOME SUCH FINE-LOOKING VISITORS. OUR POOR KINGDOM, ALAS, IS TOO ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD.



THOSE MIDGET PIRATES, THE MYRMS, LIVE IN THE SUNKEN FOREST TWO DAYS FROM HERE. THEY SELDOM RISK GOING ALL THE WAY TO THE COAST. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN HUNGRY.

THEY FIND GAME IN THAT MANGROVE?



THEIR GAME IS ISOLATED TRAVELLERS SUCH AS YOU. THOSE ACCURSED DWARFS KILL AND EAT THEM.

YOU... YOU MEAN THEY FEED ON HUMAN FLESH!? THAT'S HORRIBLE!



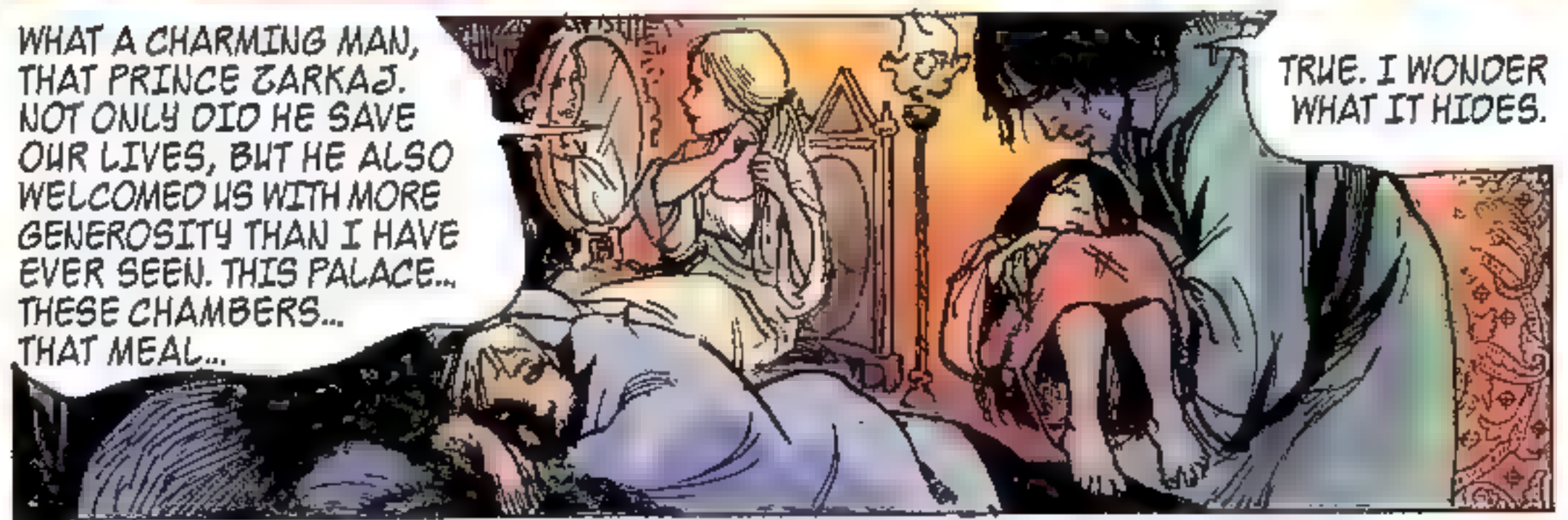
A MERE QUESTION OF TASTE, MY DEAR. BUT NO MORE ABOUT THOSE EVIL GNOMES. I SAW THE BOW YOU CARRY, THORGAL. I IMAGINE YOU'RE PROFICIENT WITH IT?

YES, I GET BY.



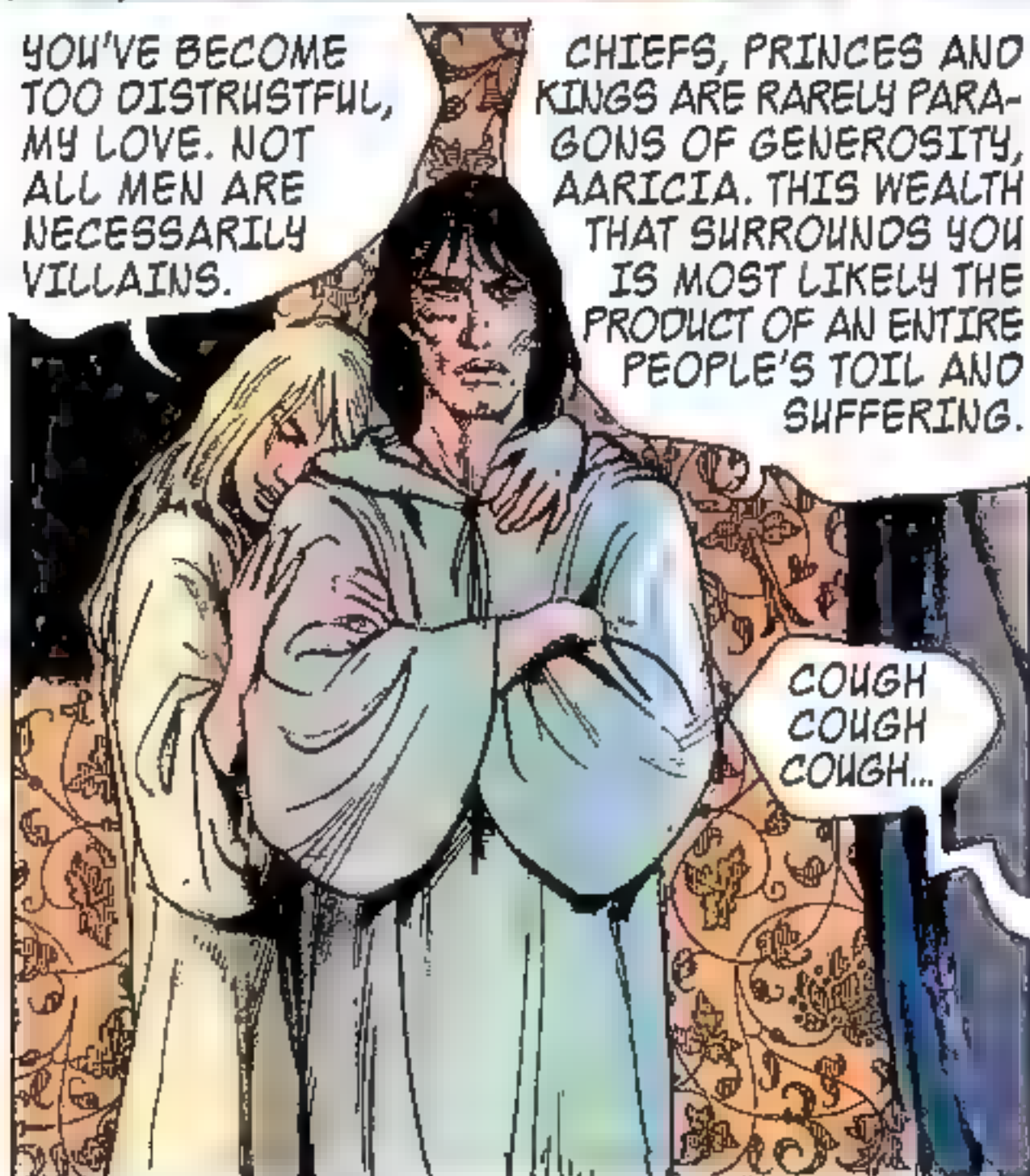
HOW ABOUT A LITTLE CONTEST TOMORROW MORNING, THEN? YOU SEE, MY PROBLEM IS THAT I'M THE BEST ARCHER IN THE KINGDOM, SO NO ONE WANTS TO COMPETE AGAINST ME ANY MORE.

I AM AT YOUR SERVICE, PRINCE ZARKAJ. I HOPE I WON'T DISAPPOINT YOU.



WHAT A CHARMING MAN, THAT PRINCE ZARKAJ. NOT ONLY DID HE SAVE OUR LIVES, BUT HE ALSO WELCOMED US WITH MORE GENEROSITY THAN I HAVE EVER SEEN. THIS PALACE... THESE CHAMBERS... THAT MEAL...

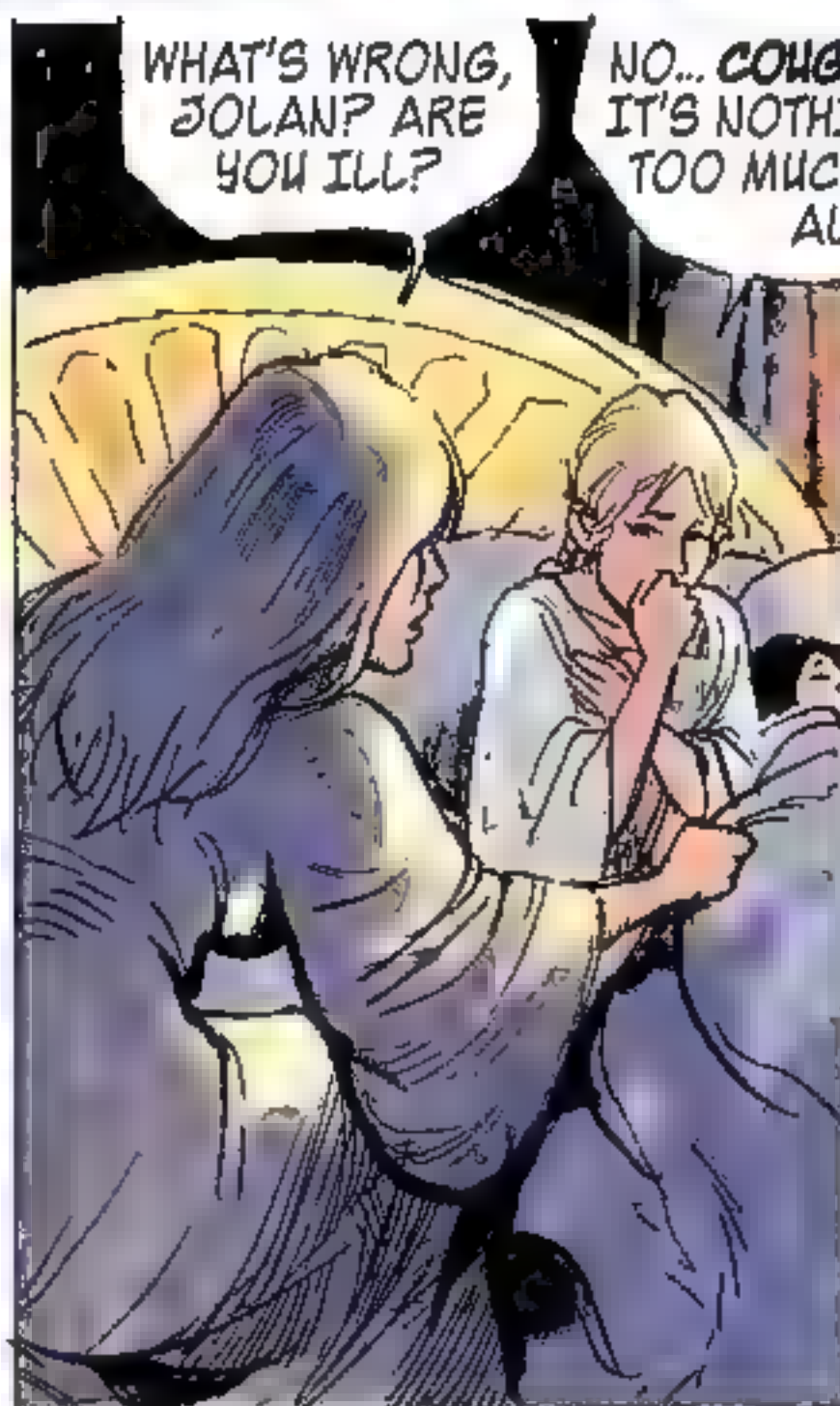
TRUE. I WONDER WHAT IT HIDES.



YOU'VE BECOME TOO DISTRUSTFUL, MY LOVE. NOT ALL MEN ARE NECESSARILY VILLAINS.

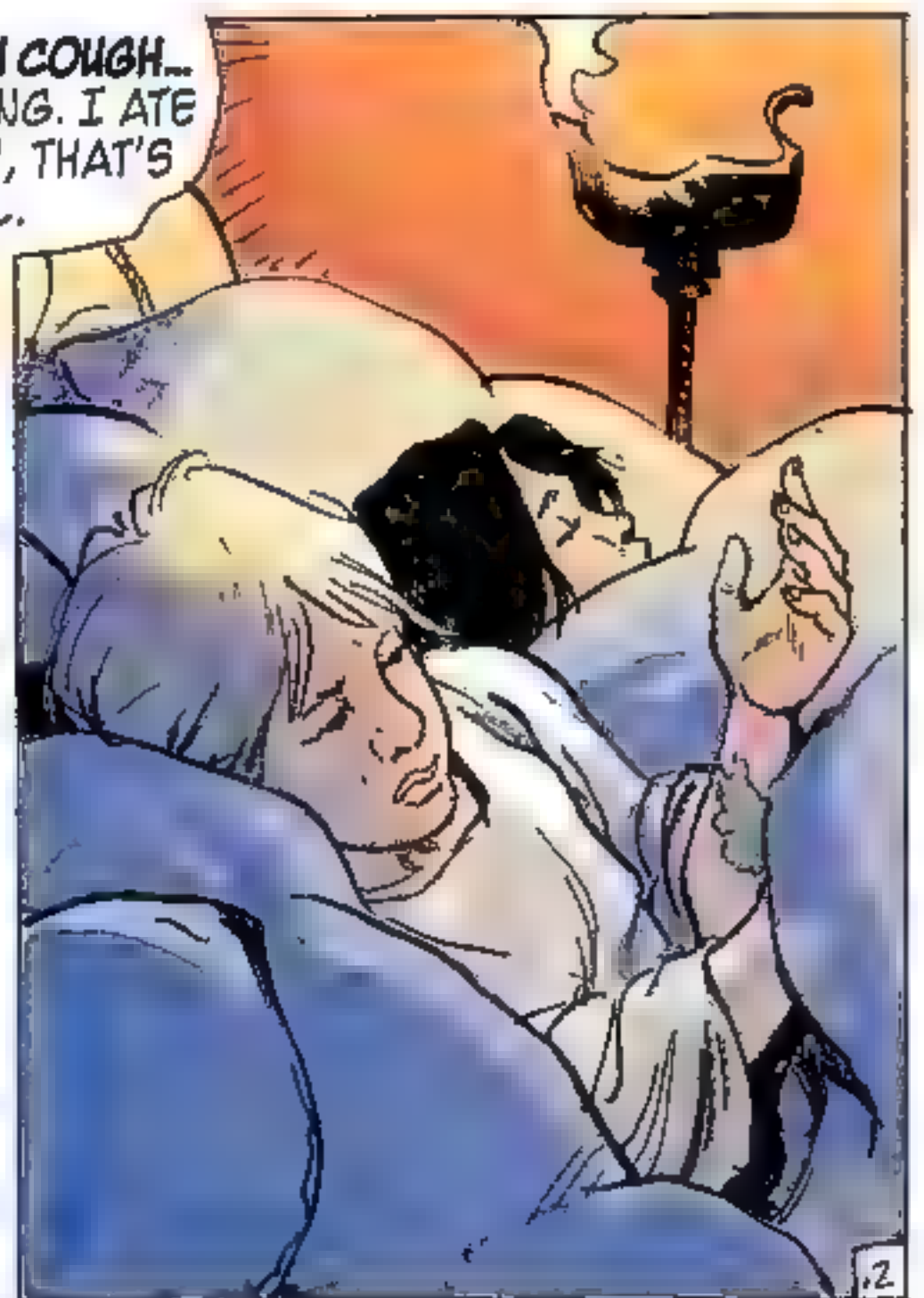
CHIEFS, PRINCES AND KINGS ARE RARELY PARAGONS OF GENEROSITY, AARICIA. THIS WEALTH THAT SURROUNDS YOU IS MOST LIKELY THE PRODUCT OF AN ENTIRE PEOPLE'S TOIL AND SUFFERING.

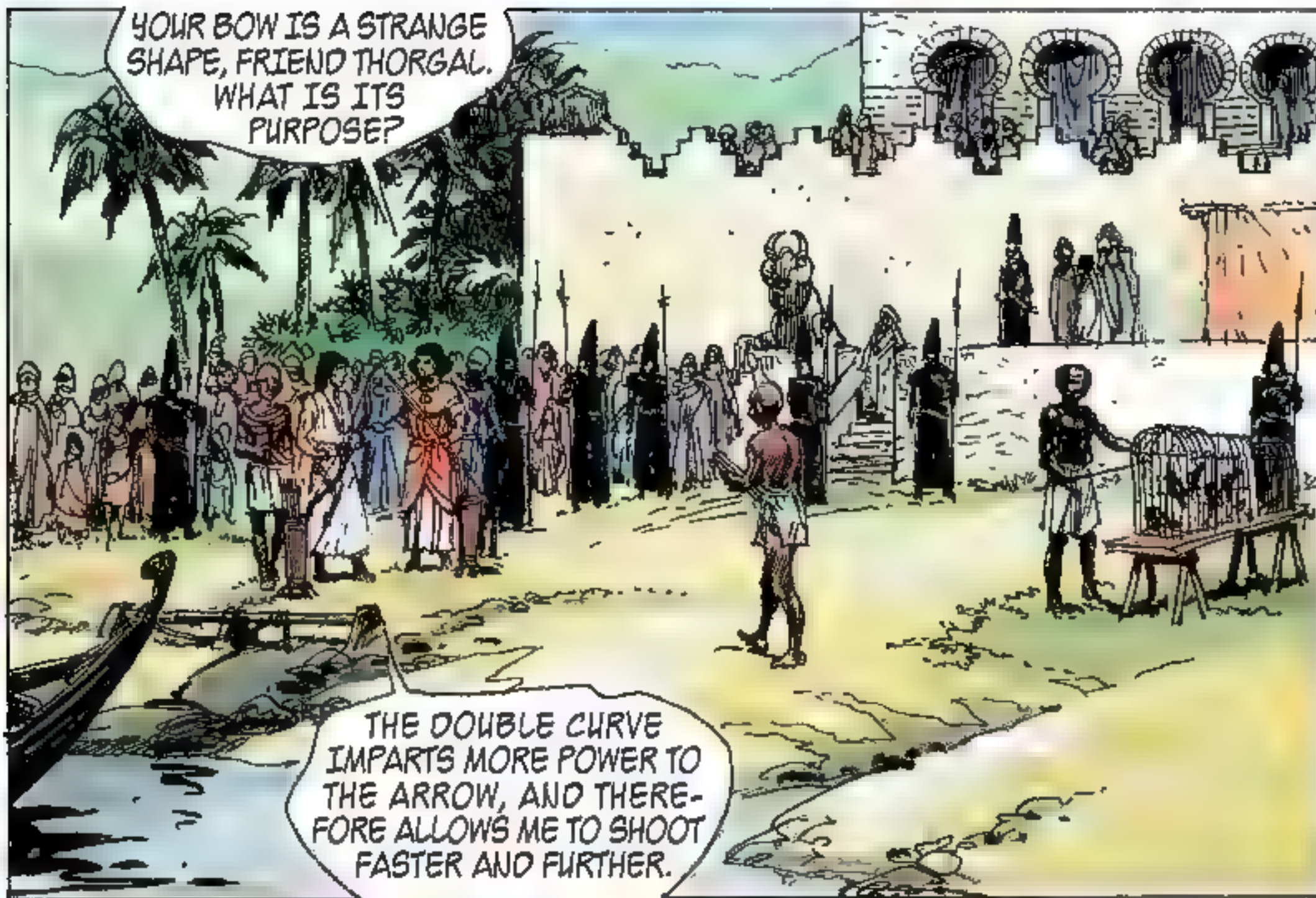
COUGH COUGH COUGH...



WHAT'S WRONG, JOLAN? ARE YOU ILL?

NO... COUGH COUGH... IT'S NOTHING. I ATE TOO MUCH, THAT'S ALL.





YOUR BOW IS A STRANGE
SHAPE, FRIEND THORGAL.
WHAT IS ITS
PURPOSE?

THE DOUBLE CURVE
IMPARTS MORE POWER TO
THE ARROW, AND THERE-
FORE ALLOWS ME TO SHOOT
FASTER AND FURTHER.

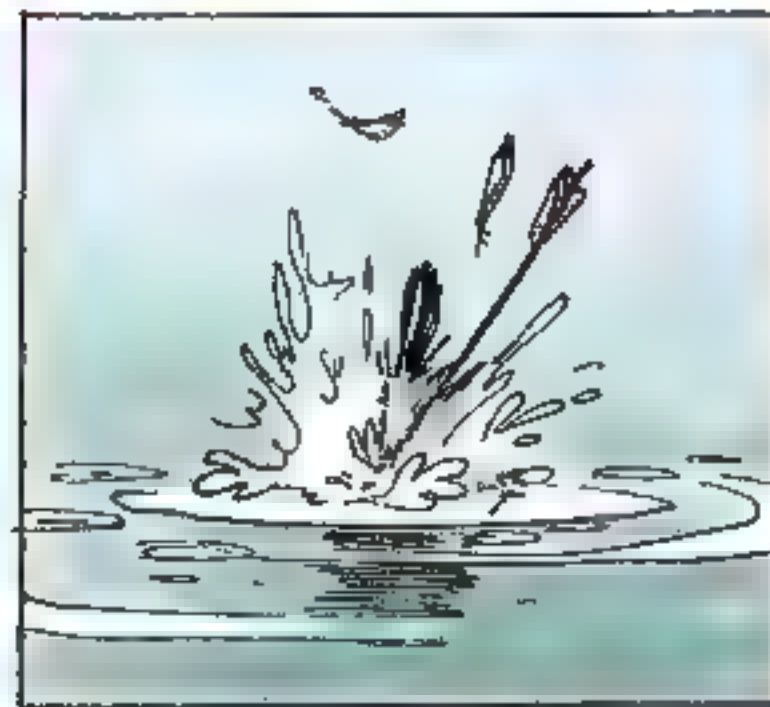
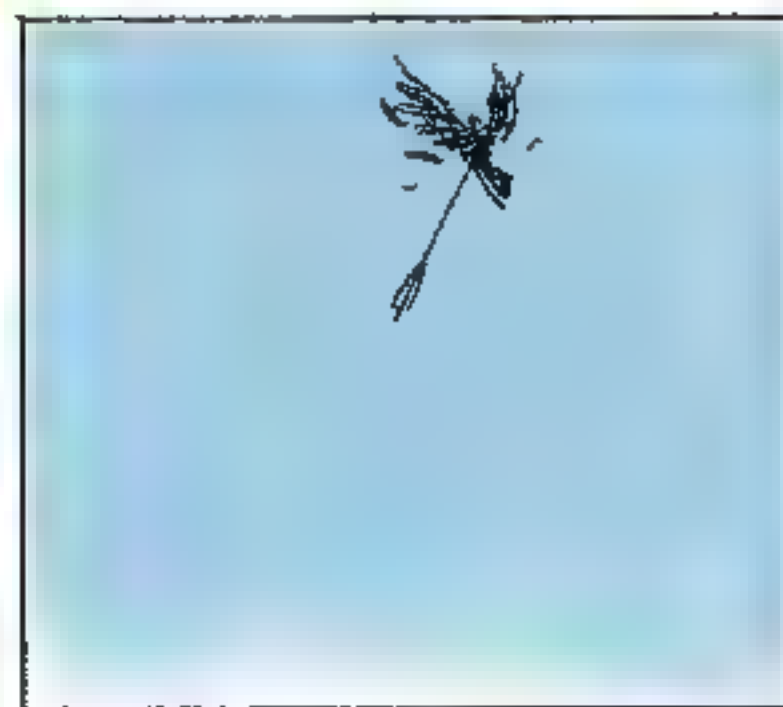
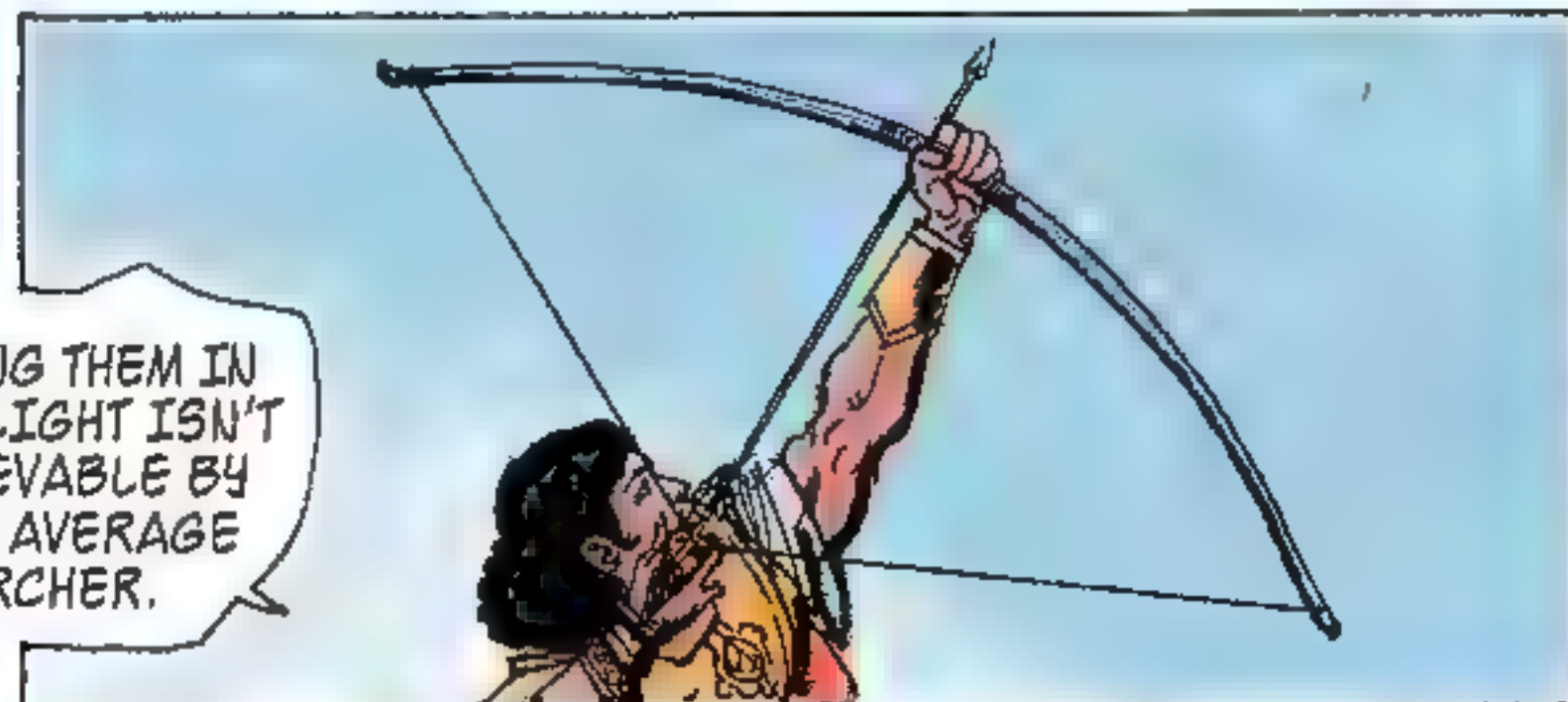
OF COURSE,
MORE STRENGTH
IS NEEDED TO
DRAW THE BOW.

BAH! STRENGTH IS
OF LITTLE IMPORT.
ACCURACY IS WHAT
MATTERS. ARE YOU
READY? I'LL START...



HITTING THEM IN
MID-FLIGHT ISN'T
ACHIEVABLE BY
YOUR AVERAGE
ARCHER.

THESE
TURTLEDOVES
ARE EXTREMELY
SWIFT...



YOUR TURN,
THORGAL. SHOW US
WHAT YOU CAN DO.



HMM... I DISLIKE
KILLING AN
ANIMAL NEED-
LESSLY.

HA! HA! HOW
SENSITIVE OF YOU!
THEN HOW WILL YOU BE
ABLE TO PROVE YOUR
SKILL?



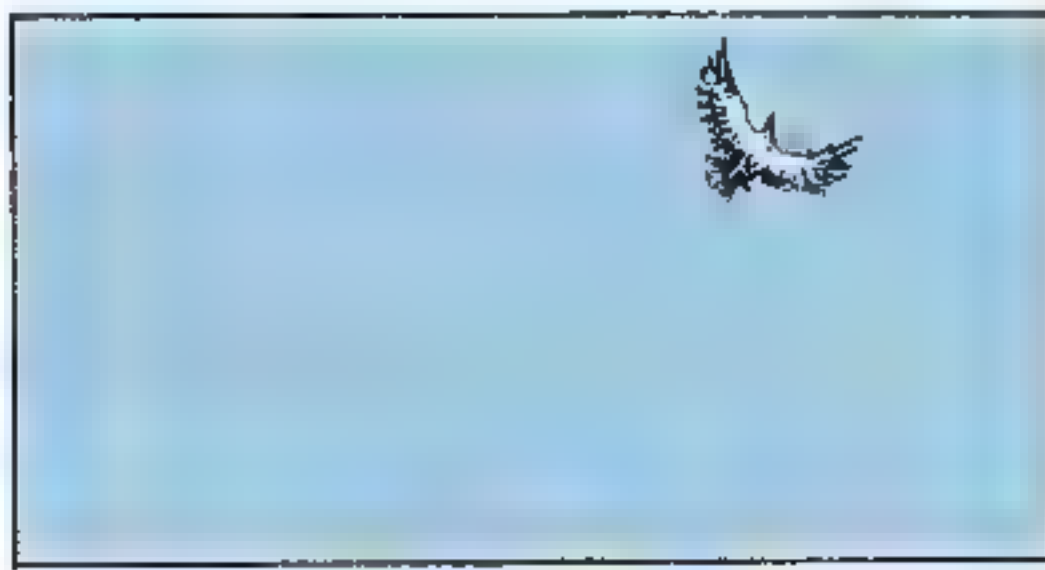
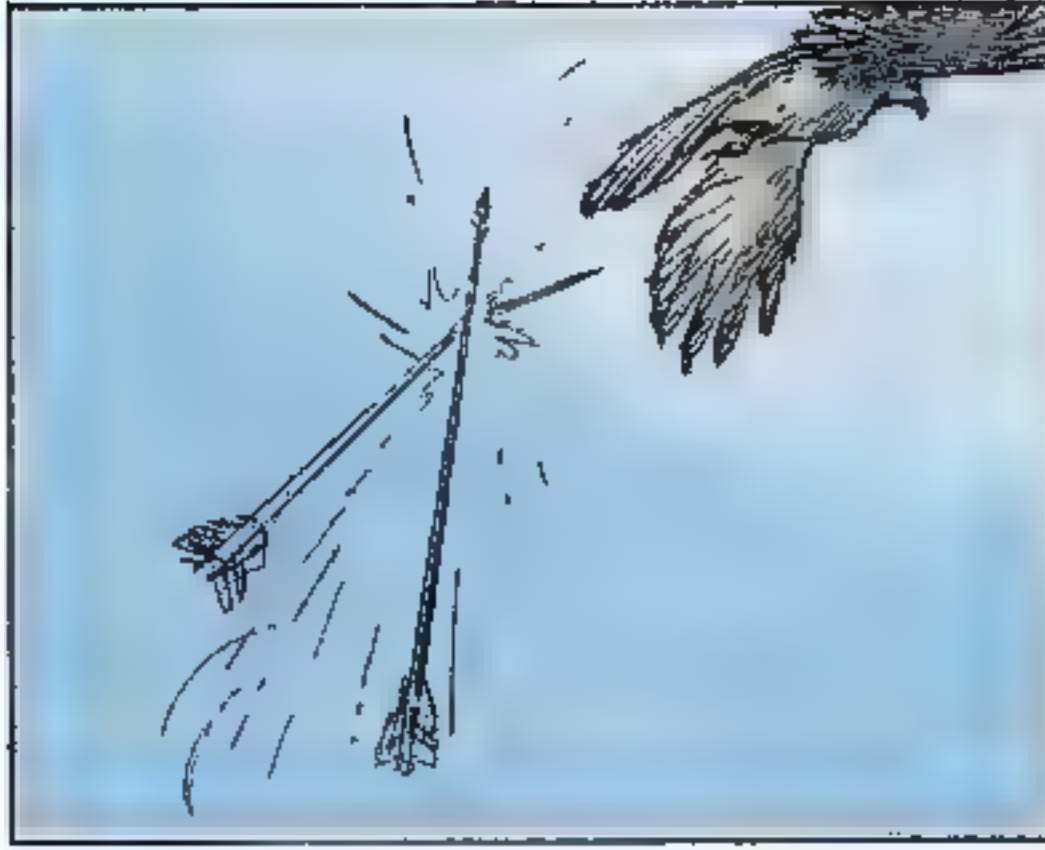
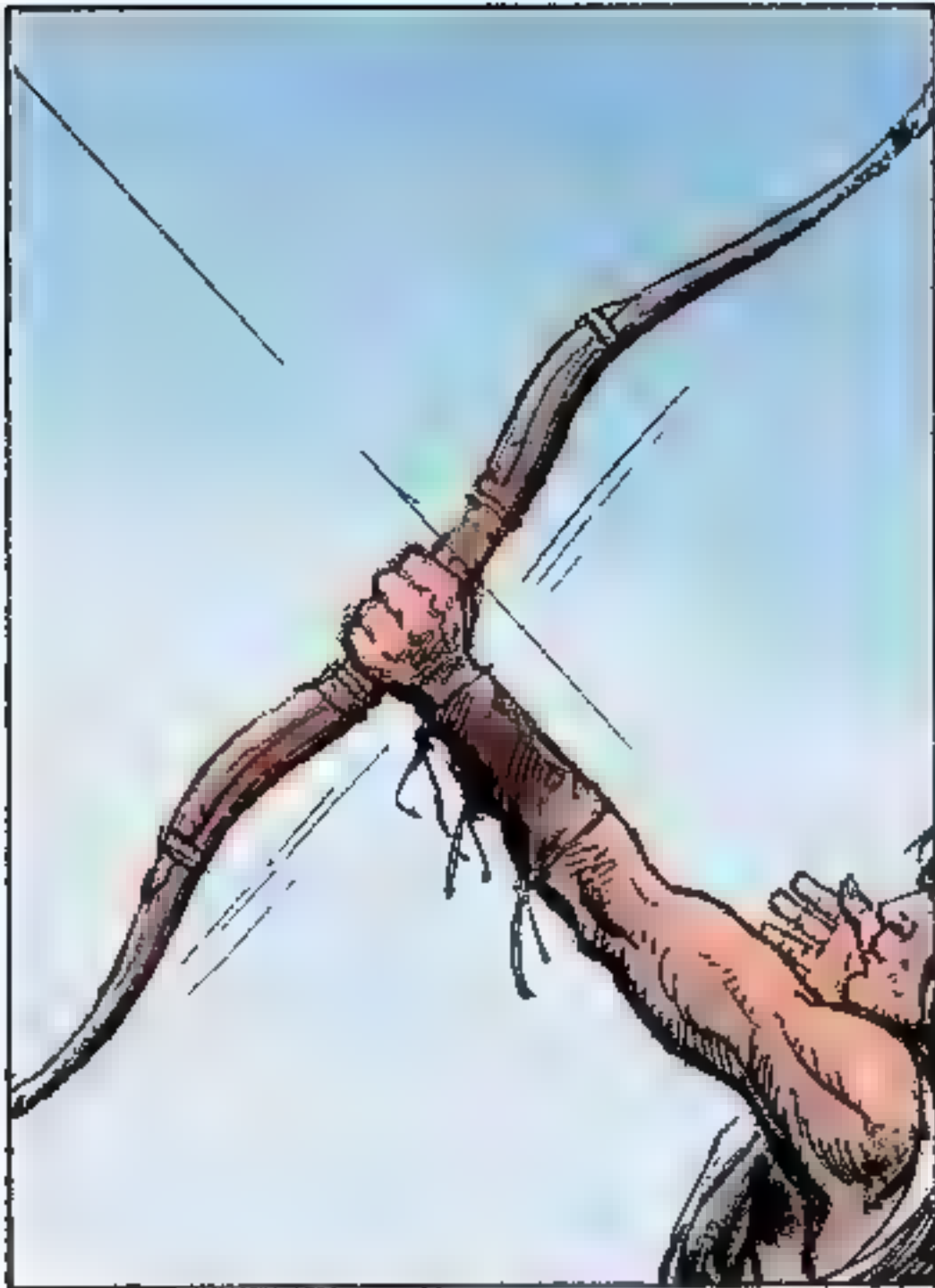
HAVE ANOTH-
ER DOVE RE-
LEASED AND
SHOOT IT.

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND
...

DO IT;
YOU'LL SEE.



FINE.



I TOLD YOU: THORGAL WILL ALWAYS BE THE BEST ARCHER EVER. BUT HOW WAS PRINCE ZARKAJ GOING TO REACT?

WELL DONE, THORGAL! BUT PERHAPS THIS WAS JUST A LUCKY SHOT?

WOULD YOU LIKE US TO TRY AGAIN?



NO, NOT TODAY. WE'LL GO HUNTING LATER AND SEE.



OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, IT WAS ALL FEASTS, CELEBRATIONS, HUNTS AND BOAT TRIPS OVER THE LAKE. AARICIA WAS DELIGHTED, ESPECIALLY AS THE PRINCE HAD OFFERED HER A GORGEOUS SILVER AND CORAL NECKLACE.

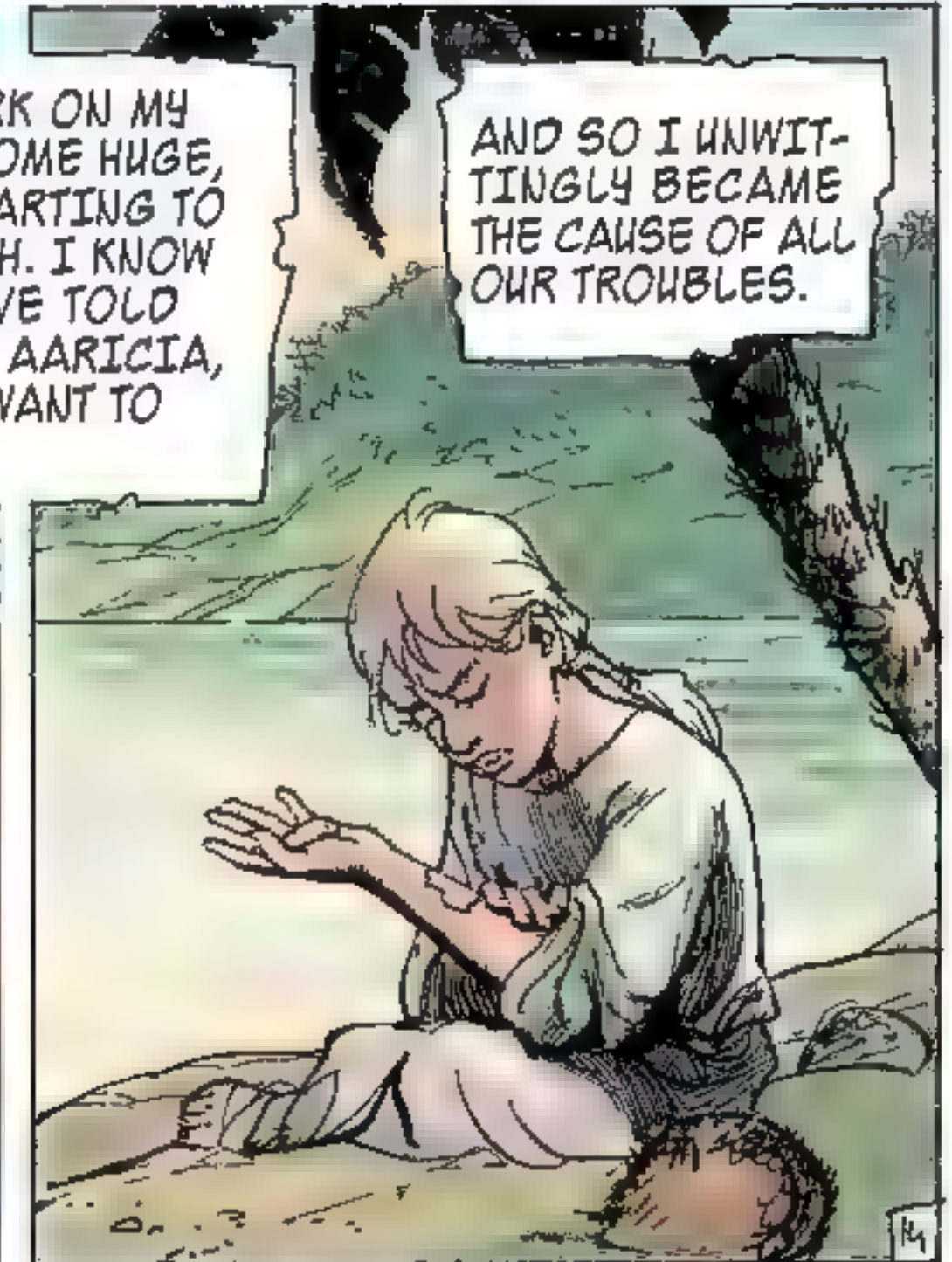
AS FOR THORGAL, HE SAID LITTLE. BUT I COULD SENSE THAT HE COULDN'T WAIT UNTIL WE LEFT.



WHEN HE WASN'T HUNTING MARSH BOARS WITH THE PRINCE, HE SPENT HIS DAYS HELPING THE CARPENTERS REPAIR OUR BOAT, OR PREPARING SUPPLIES FOR THE NEXT LEG OF OUR JOURNEY.

THE BLUE MARK ON MY ARM HAD BECOME HUGE, AND I WAS STARTING TO FEEL FEVERISH. I KNOW I SHOULD HAVE TOLD THORGAL AND AARICIA, BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO WORRY THEM.

AND SO I UNWITTINGLY BECAME THE CAUSE OF ALL OUR TROUBLES.



BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT?
NO AMOUNT OF WEALTH
CAN CREATE THE SIGHTS
THAT NATURE OFFERS.

IT'S THE LAST TIME
I WATCH THEM FROM
YOUR PALACE'S TERRACE,
PRINCE ZARKAJ. WE
LEAVE TOMORROW
AT DAWN.

I KNOW. AND IT PAINS
ME VERY MUCH. I DON'T
WANT YOU TO GO,
AARICIA.

YET,
I MUST
LEAVE.

ONLY IF YOU SO DECIDE,
AARICIA. STAY HERE
WITH ME. YOUR CHILDREN
TOO, IF YOU WISH. MY
PALACE, MY TREAS-
URES, THE CROWN
THAT WILL ONE DAY
BE MINE ... SHALL
BE YOURS.

HE IS A LOWT. SKILLED AND
BRAVE, I'LL ADMIT. BUT HE
WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO MORE
THAN A PENNILESS DRIFTER.
YOU DESERVE BETTER THAN
THAT, AARICIA. DIDN'T YOUR
DAUGHTER TELL ME THAT YOU
WERE BORN A PRINCESS?

IT'S TRUE.

YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS,
I HOPE? I LOVE THORGAL.
I WILL FOLLOW HIM UNTIL
WE FIND THE PLACE WHERE
WE CAN LIVE IN PEACE.

BUT THAT'S THE ONLY MERIT
I HAVE: BEING BORN INTO IT.
JUST LIKE YOUR ONLY MERIT
IN BEING PRINCE IS THAT YOU
ARE THE SON OF THIS LAND'S
KING. AS FOR THORGAL, IT IS HIS
COURAGE AND STEADFASTNESS
THAT HAVE EARNED HIM THE
ONLY NOBILITY THAT MATTERS
IN MY EYES: THAT OF THE
HEART.

ARE YOU
SAYING I LACK
COURAGE?

NO, I DIDN'T.
I...

I WANT YOU, AARICIA!
WILLINGLY OR NOT, YOU
WILL BE MINE! NO ONE
DENIES ME!

STOP! YOU'RE
HURTING ME...

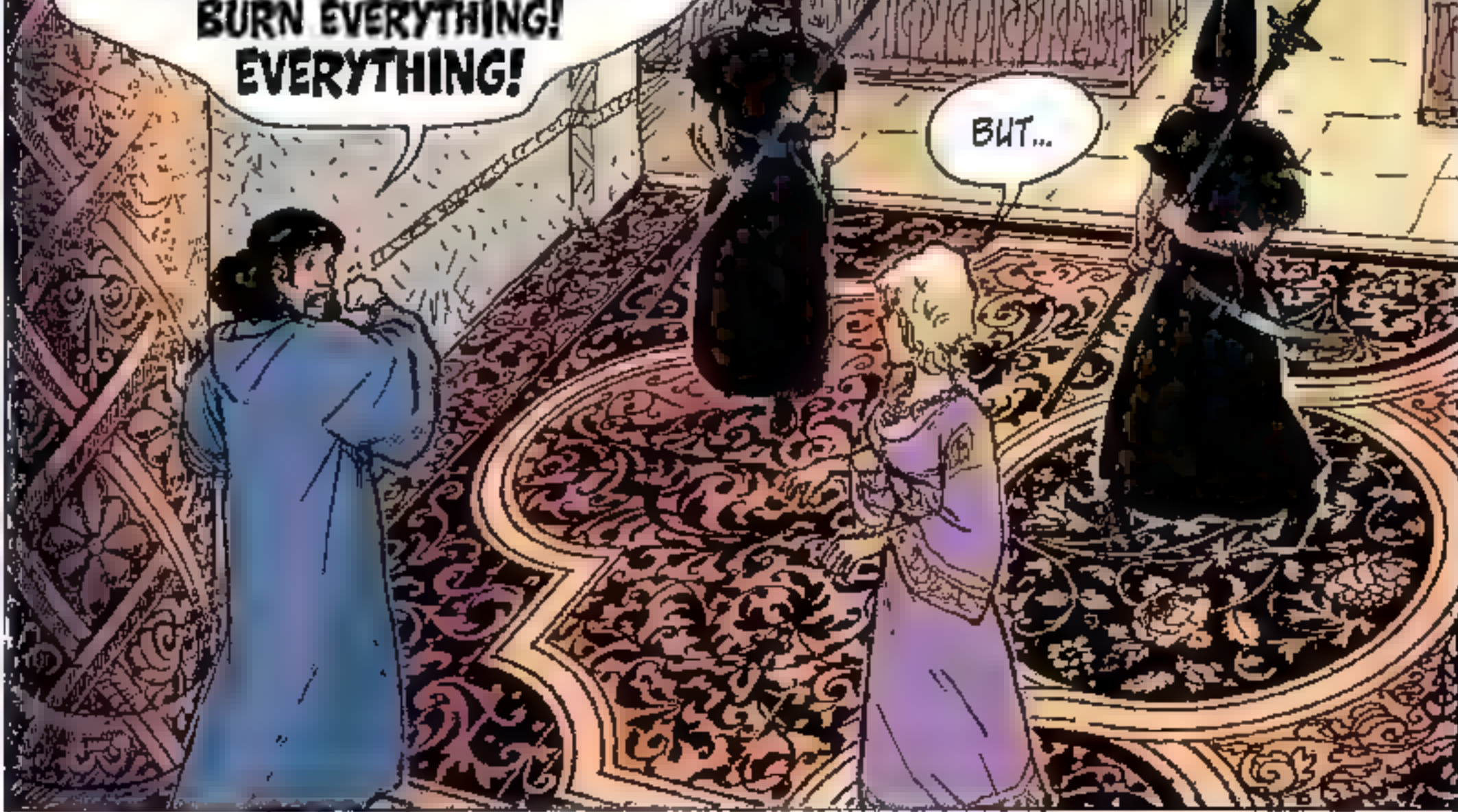
BY ALL THE
DEMONS...
**THE BLUE
PLAGUE!!!**

THE BLUE
PLAGUE? WHAT
ARE YOU...?

S... STAY
AWAY FROM ME!
**GUARDS!...
GUARDS!
TO ME!...**



**ARREST HER, BUT DON'T GO NEAR
HER. TAKE HER CHILDREN TOO. AND
BURN THEIR CLOTHES AND EVERYTHING
THEY'VE TOUCHED IN THIS PALACE.
BURN EVERYTHING!
EVERYTHING!**



WHAT'S
GOING
ON? I
HEARD...

**HIM TOO! ESPECIALLY
HIM! SINK HIS BOAT!
DESTROY HIS SUPPLIES!
THROW HIS WEAPONS
INTO THE LAKE!**



**TAKE THEM AWAY! TAKE
THEM AWAY NOW! THROW
THEM INTO THE LABYRINTH
WITH THE OTHERS!
HURRY!!**



**THE BLUE PLAGUE! I LET THE
BLUE PLAGUE INSIDE MY PALACE!
MAY ALL THE GODS OF ALL THE
STARS HELP ME!**

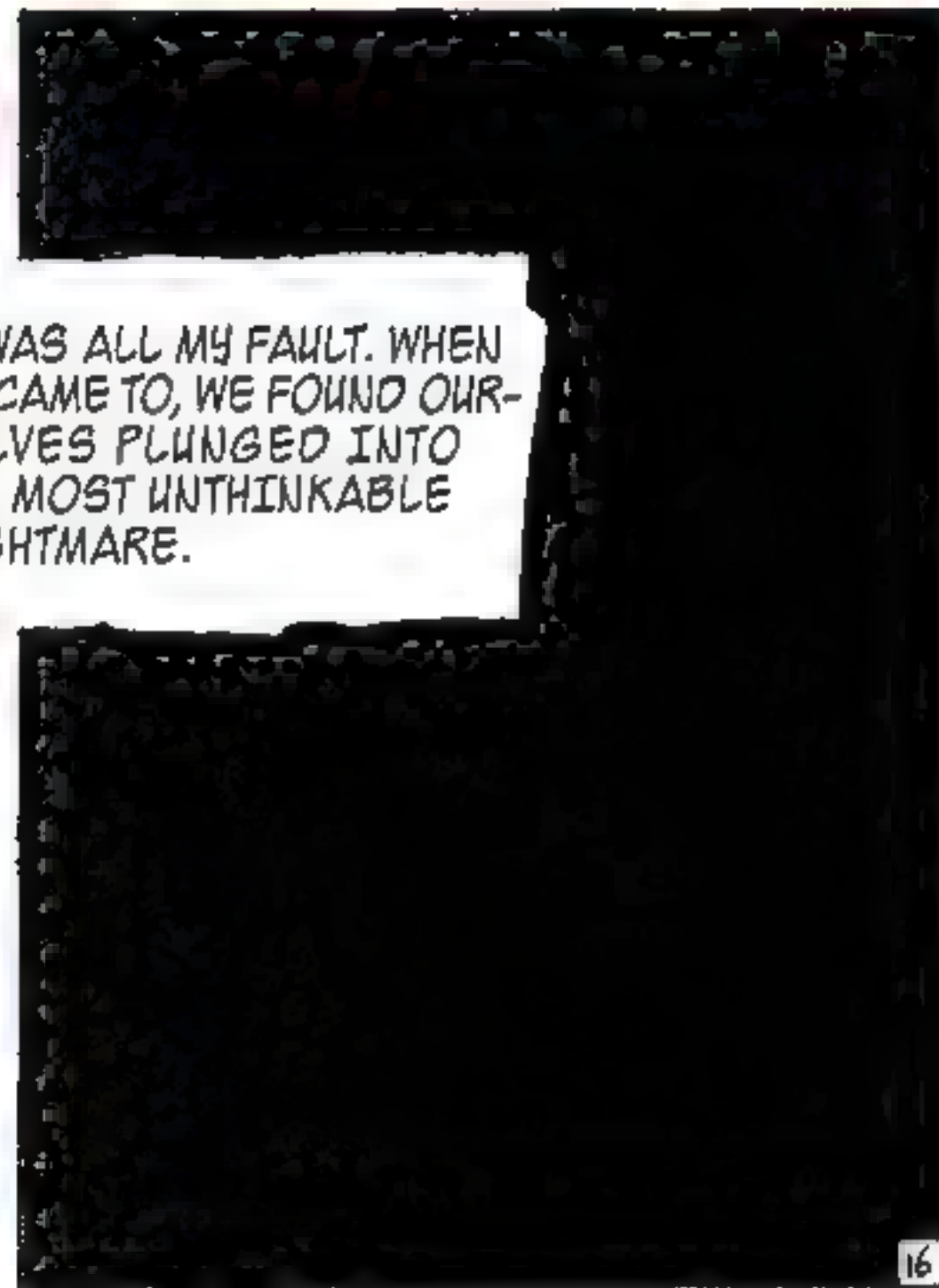


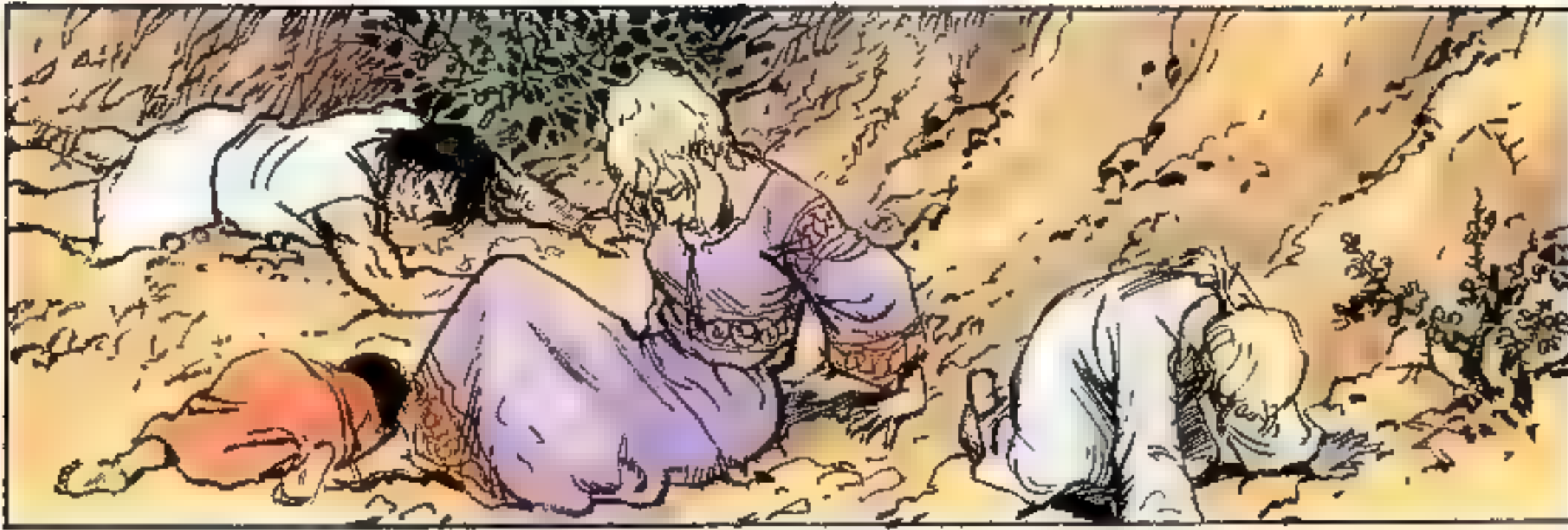
WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO
US. SURROUNDED BY GUARDS,
WITH NO WEAPONS, WE
COULDN'T EVEN DEFEND
OURSELVES.



THEN THEY KNOCKED US
OUT. THORGAL, AARICIA,
ME... EVEN LITTLE
WOLFCUB.

IT WAS ALL MY FAULT. WHEN
WE CAME TO, WE FOUND OUR-
SELVES PLUNGED INTO
THE MOST UNTHINKABLE
NIGHTMARE.





THORGAL...
WHERE ARE
WE?

WHERE YOUR DEAR PRINCE
ZARKAJ SENT US, I IMAGINE.
AND I DON'T THINK IT'S
A PLEASANT PLACE.



WHO ARE
YOU? WHAT
DO YOU WANT
FROM US?

QIII2K2.0233 S20
SS 4 S24 VII362 91

I DON'T
UNDERSTAND
WHAT THEY'RE
SAYING.

DO YOU THINK
THEY MEAN US
HARM?

THESE POOR PEOPLE
ARE HARMLESS. THEY'RE
SIMPLY OFFERING YOU
A LITTLE FOOD.



THIS IS
FOOD?

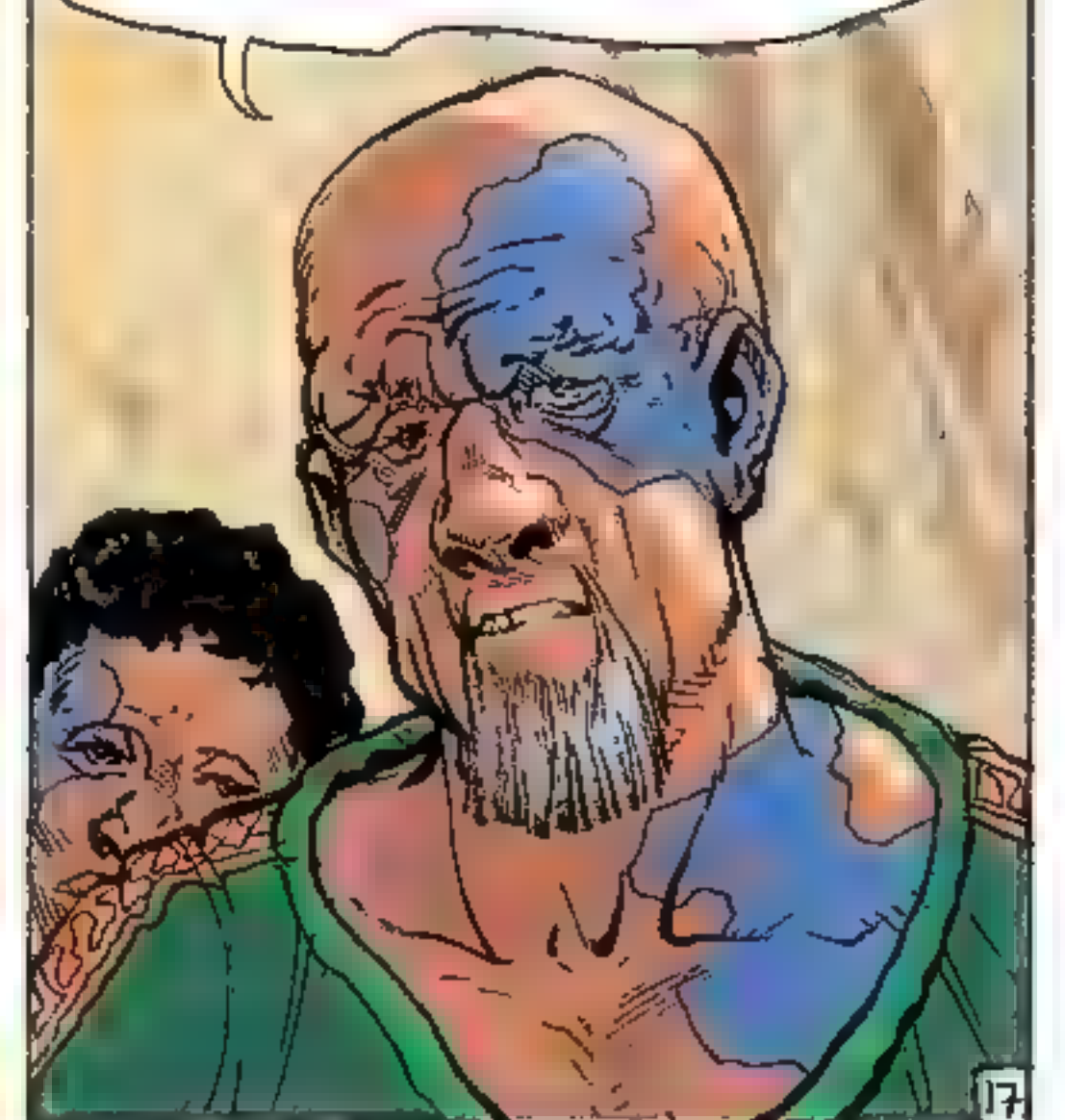
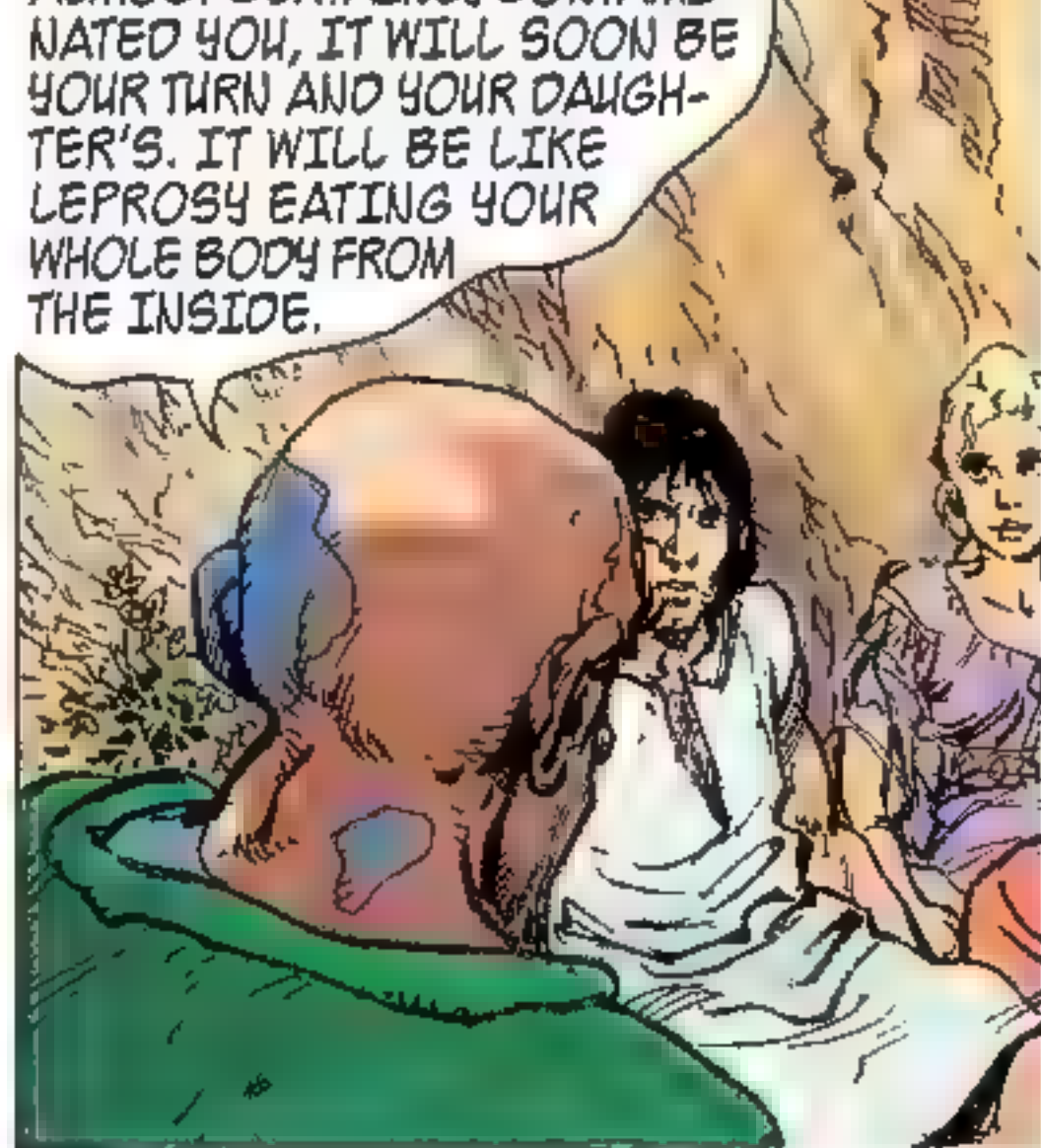
THE ONLY ONE
AVAILABLE HERE.
THE BRANCHES OF THIS
THORNY BUSH SECRETE A
SAP THAT KEEPS US FROM
STARVING FOR THE FEW
DAYS WE HAVE LEFT
TO LIVE.

ANYWAY, DYING OF
STARVATION OR THE
BLUE PLAGUE MAKES
LITTLE DIFFERENCE.

WHAT IS THIS
BLUE PLAGUE YOU
SPEAK OF?

IT'S THE REASON YOU WERE
THROWN IN HERE. YOUR SON
IS ALREADY AFFLICTED; SO
IS YOUR WIFE. AS THEY'VE
ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTAMI-
NATED YOU, IT WILL SOON BE
YOUR TURN AND YOUR DAUGH-
TER'S. IT WILL BE LIKE
LEPROSY EATING YOUR
WHOLE BODY FROM
THE INSIDE.

AND IN EIGHT DAYS AT THE MOST, LIKE
ME, LIKE ALL THOSE DOWN HERE, YOU
WILL BE DEAD. **THERE IS NOTHING
ANYONE CAN DO TO PREVENT IT!!**



THIS IS WHERE ALL THE POOR SOULS WHO HAVE CONTRACTED THE **BLUE PLAGUE** HAVE BEEN CONFINED SINCE THIS ACCURSED EPIDEMIC BEGAN TO SWEEP ACROSS THE **KINGDOM OF ZHAR**. THIS PLACE IS CALLED THE LABYRINTH, NOT BECAUSE YOU CAN GET LOST IN IT BUT BECAUSE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LEAVE IT.



IMPOSSIBLE? I'VE CLIMBED STEEPER SLOPES THAN THESE BEFORE.

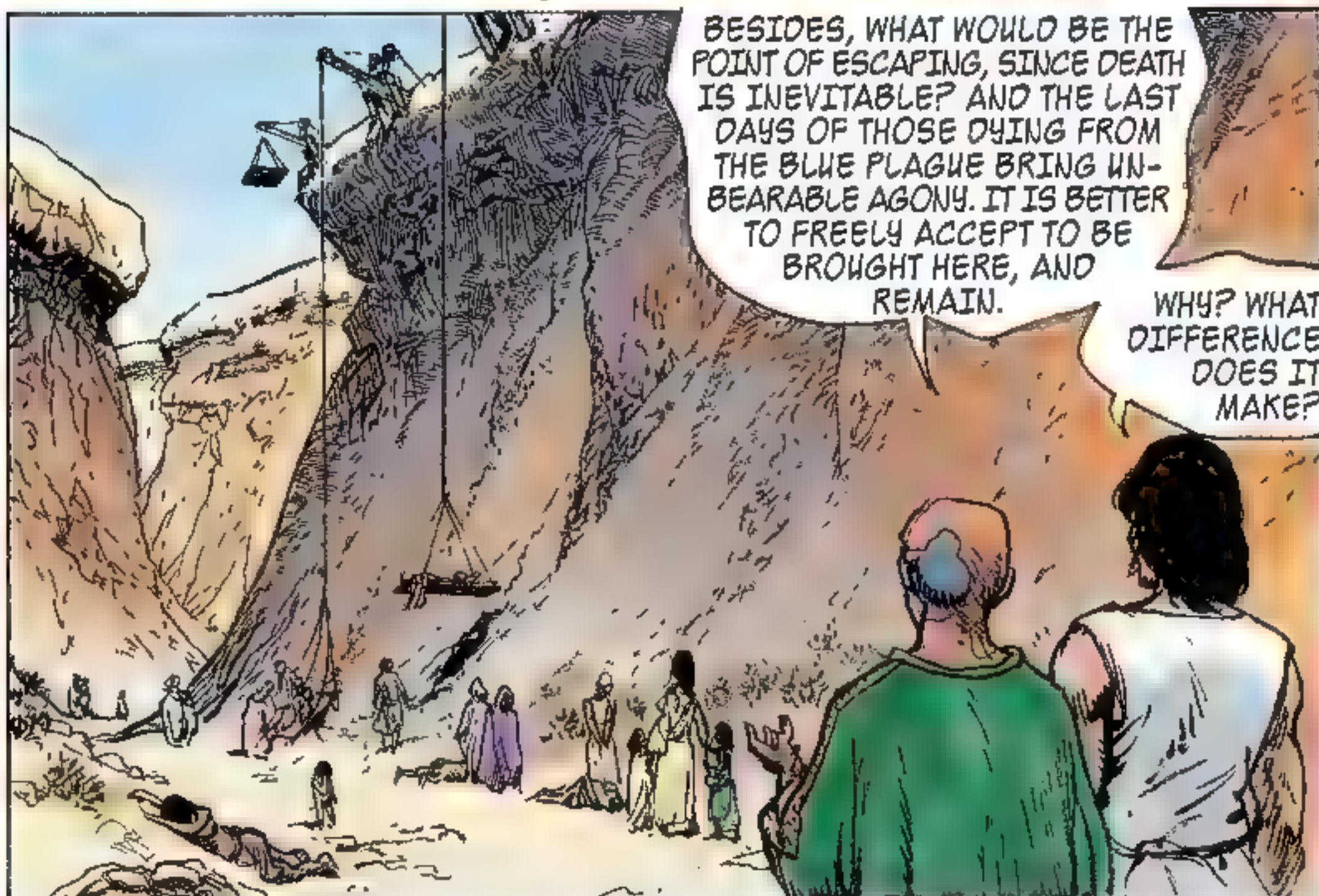
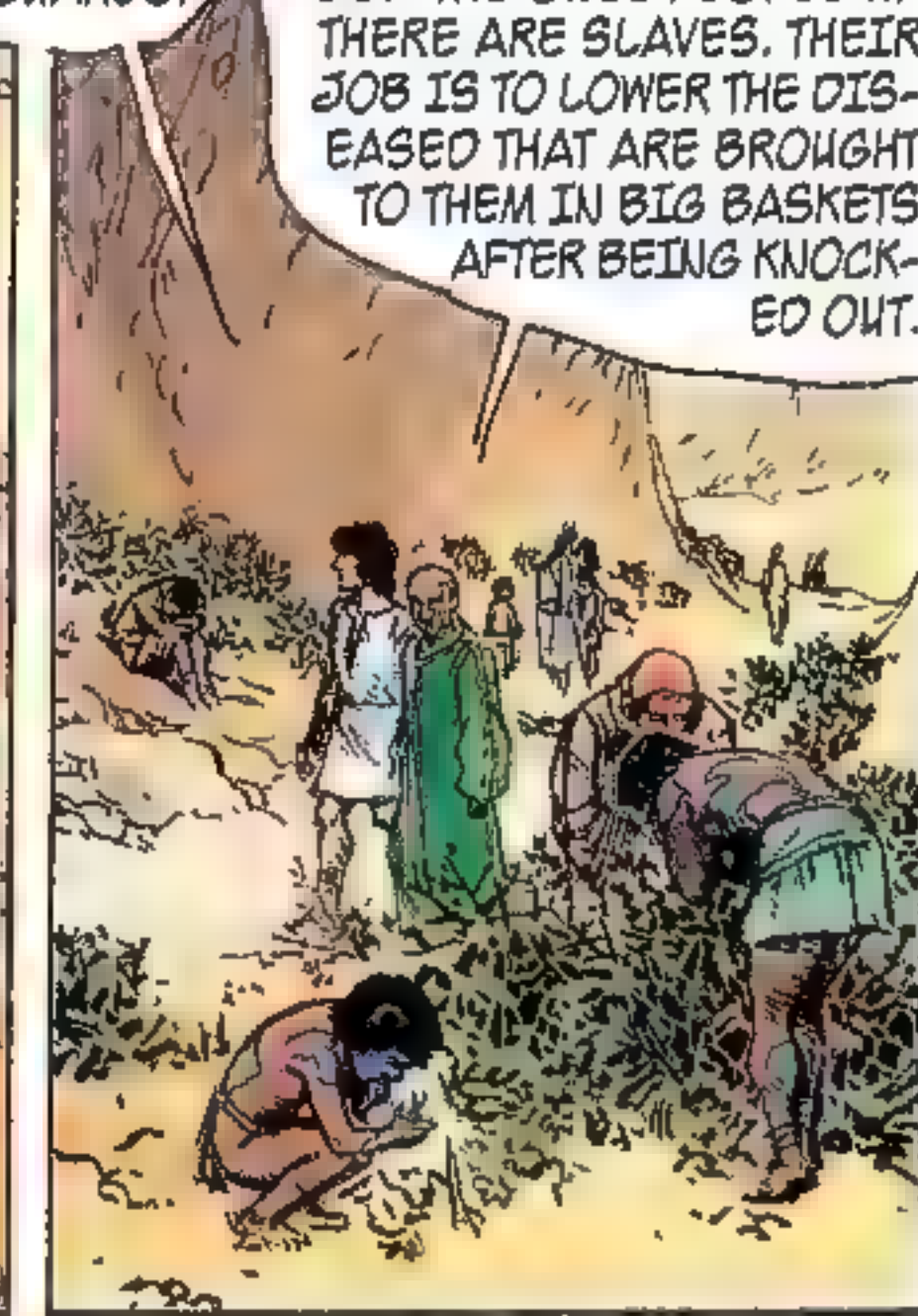
OF STONE AND ROCKY SOIL, NO DOUBT. ON THESE SAND WALLS, THOUGH, YOU WOULDN'T GET THREE FEET OFF THE GROUND.



IT WOULD BE LIKE SCALING A WATERFALL. BELIEVE ME, THE LABYRINTH NEEDS NEITHER DOORS NOR BARS TO BE THE MOST SECURE OF PRISONS.

ARE THERE ANY GUARDS?

WHAT USE WOULD THEY BE? THE ONLY PEOPLE UP THERE ARE SLAVES. THEIR JOB IS TO LOWER THE DISEASED THAT ARE BROUGHT TO THEM IN BIG BASKETS AFTER BEING KNOCKED OUT.

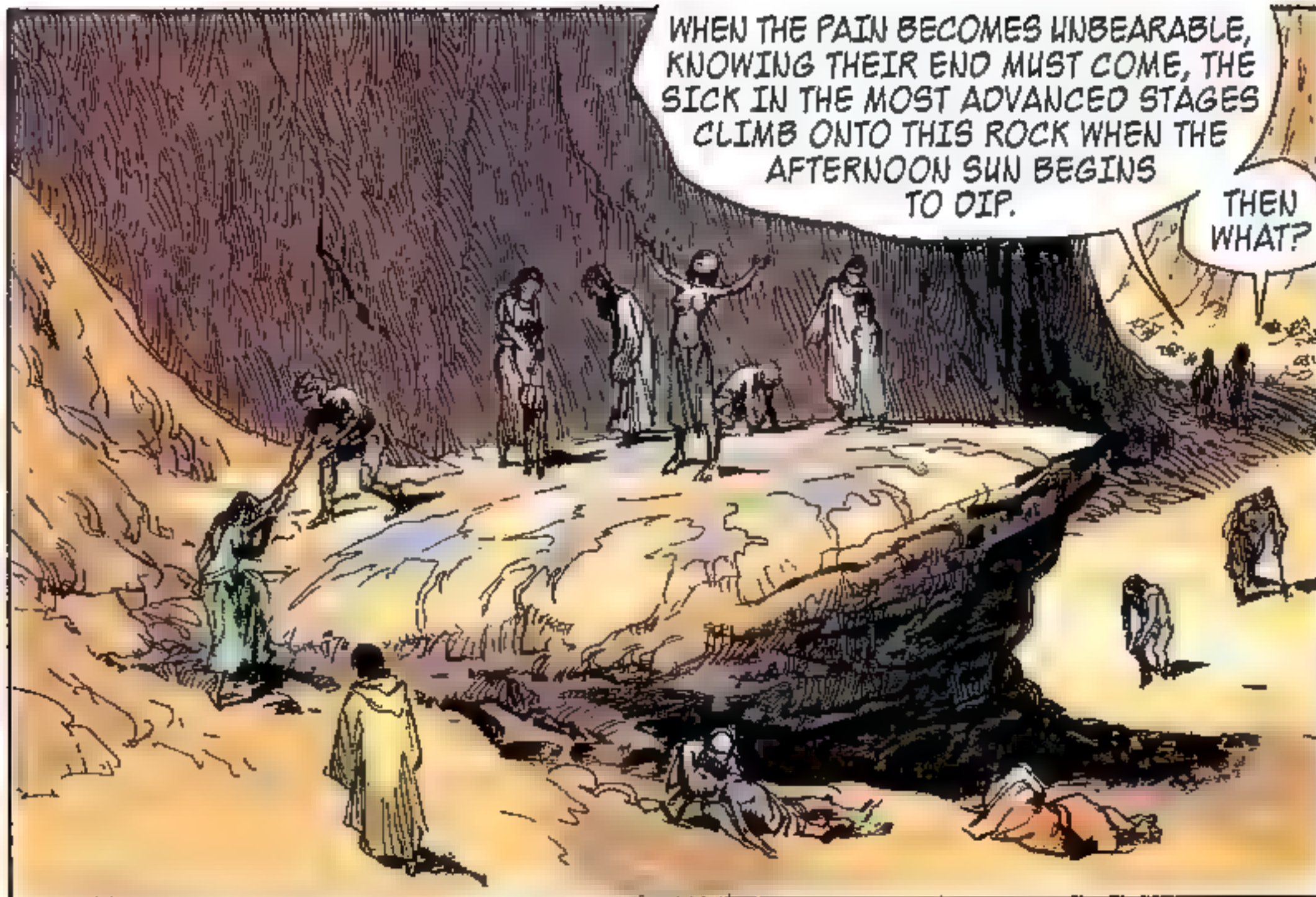


BESIDES, WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT OF ESCAPING, SINCE DEATH IS INEVITABLE? AND THE LAST DAYS OF THOSE DYING FROM THE BLUE PLAGUE BRING UN-BEARABLE AGONY. IT IS BETTER TO FREELY ACCEPT TO BE BROUGHT HERE, AND REMAIN.

WHY? WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

COME. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND ONCE YOU SEE THE **ROCK OF RELEASE**!



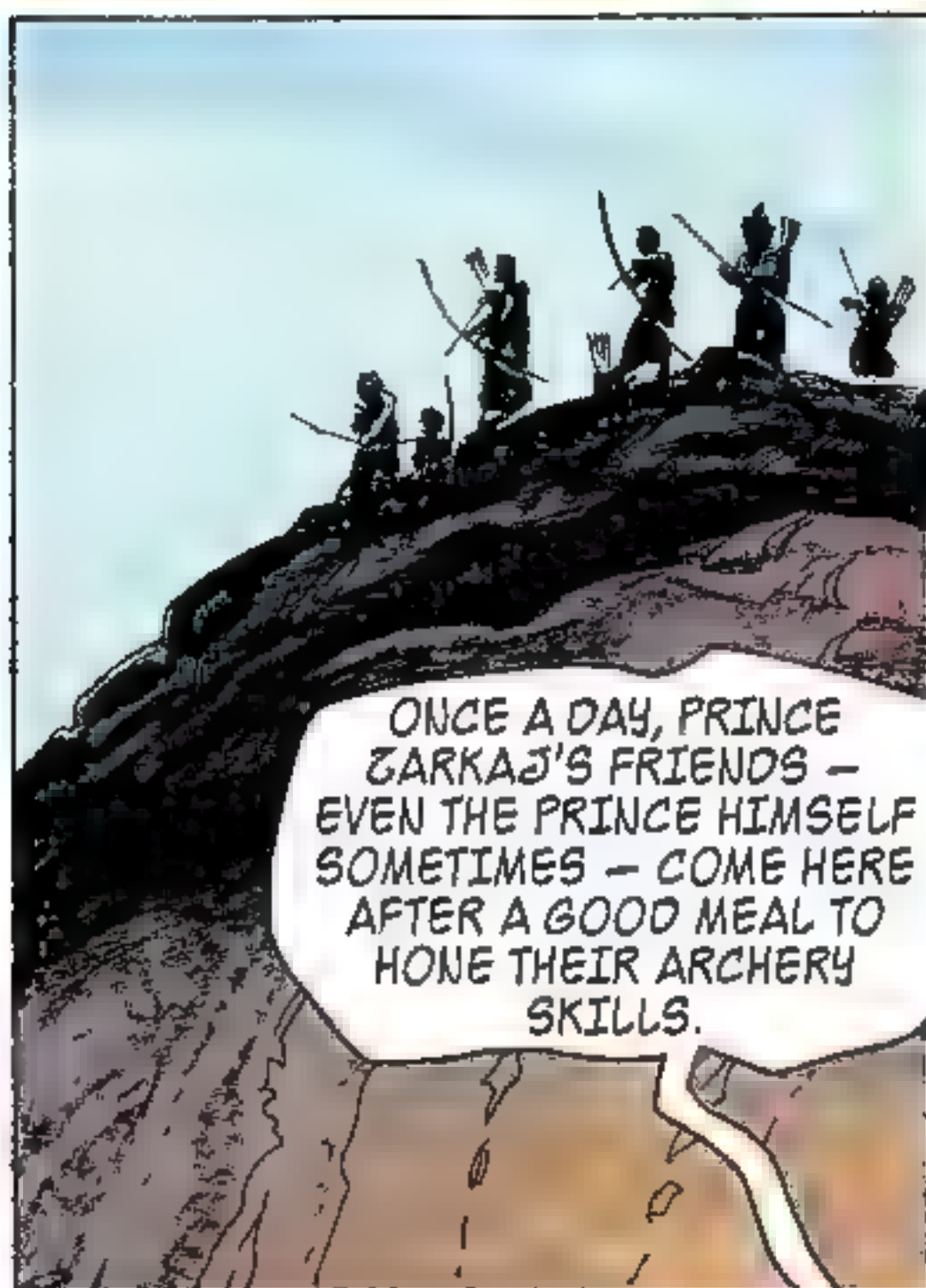


WHEN THE PAIN BECOMES UNBEARABLE, KNOWING THEIR END MUST COME, THE SICK IN THE MOST ADVANCED STAGES CLIMB ONTO THIS ROCK WHEN THE AFTERNOON SUN BEGINS TO DIP.

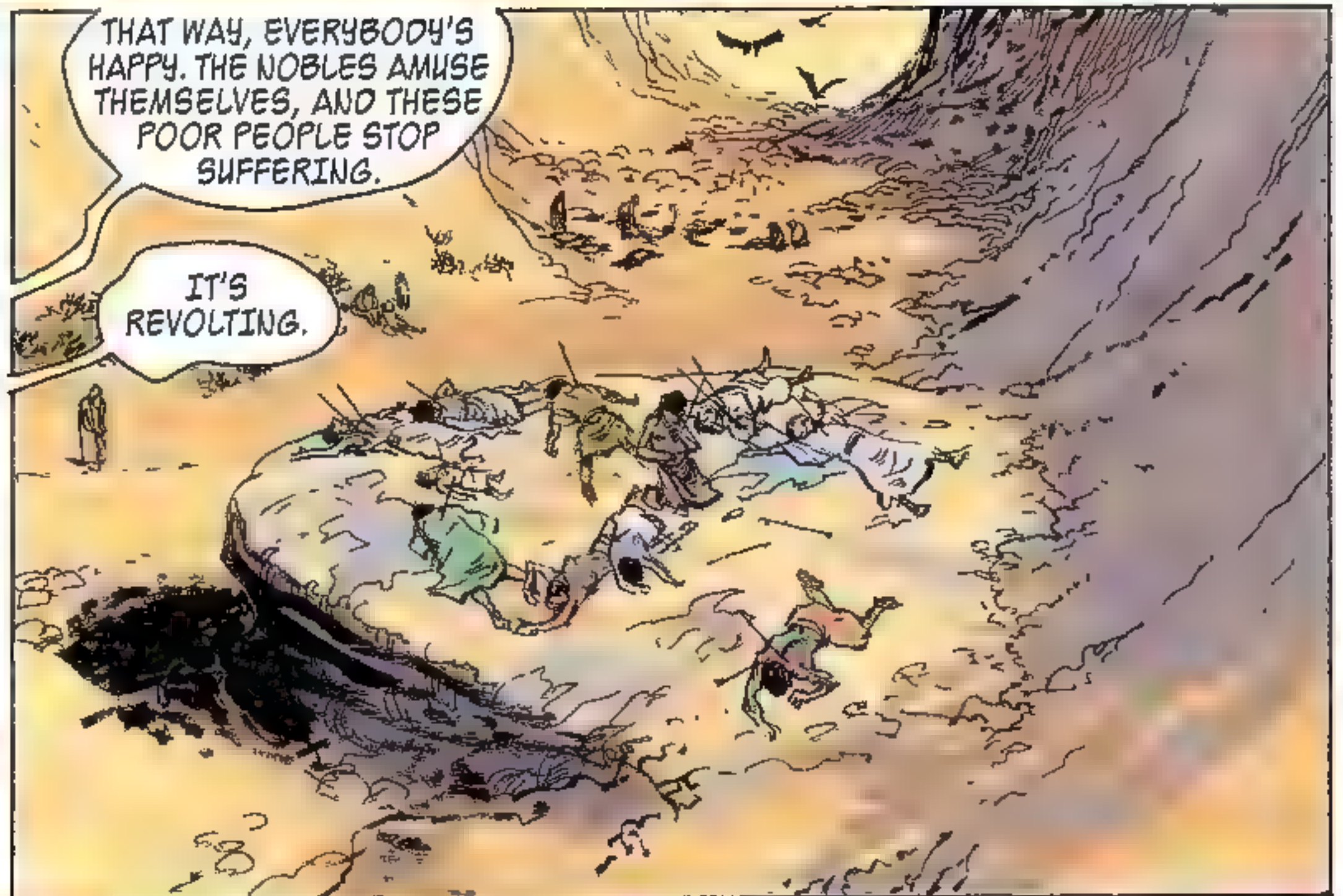
THEN WHAT?



THEN? LOOK UP THERE. IT'S TIME. THE HOUR OF RELEASE.

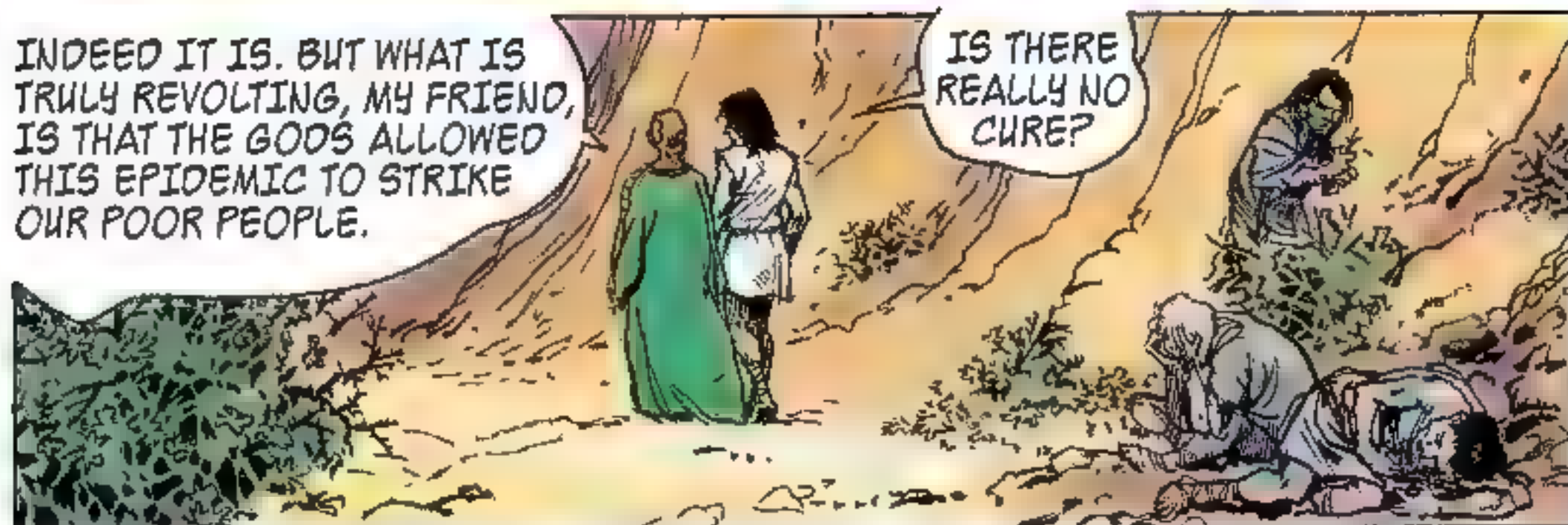


ONCE A DAY, PRINCE ZARKAJ'S FRIENDS — EVEN THE PRINCE HIMSELF SOMETIMES — COME HERE AFTER A GOOD MEAL TO HONE THEIR ARCHERY SKILLS.



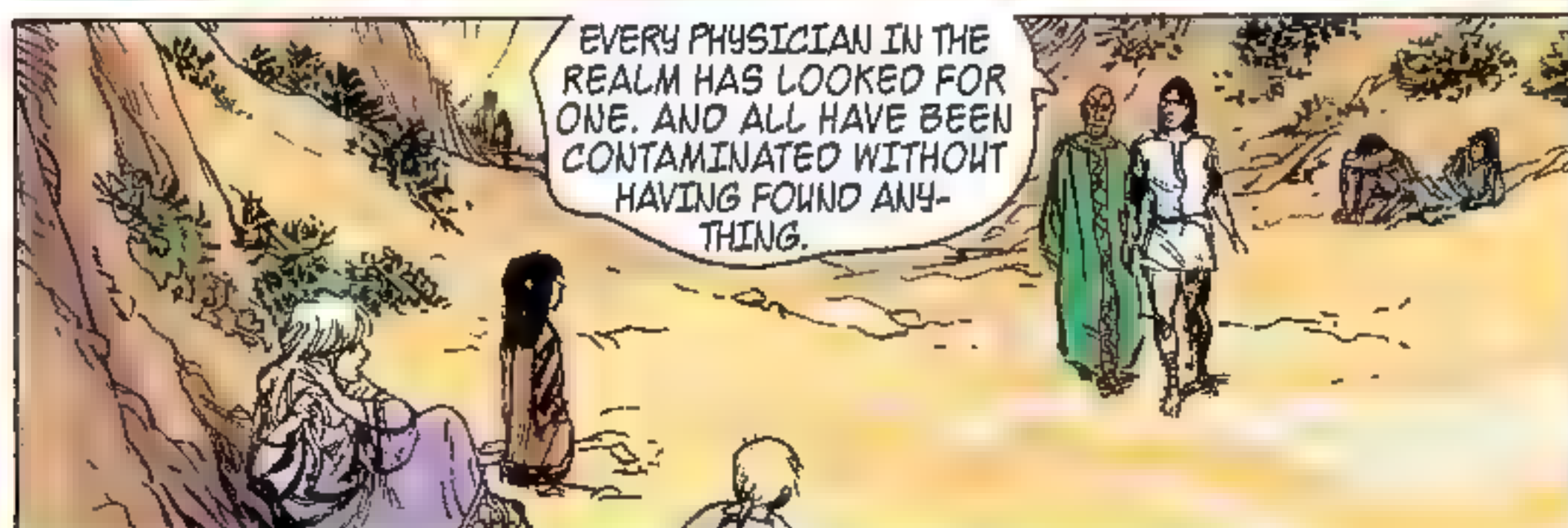
THAT WAY, EVERYBODY'S HAPPY. THE NOBLES AMUSE THEMSELVES, AND THESE POOR PEOPLE STOP SUFFERING.

IT'S REVOLTING.

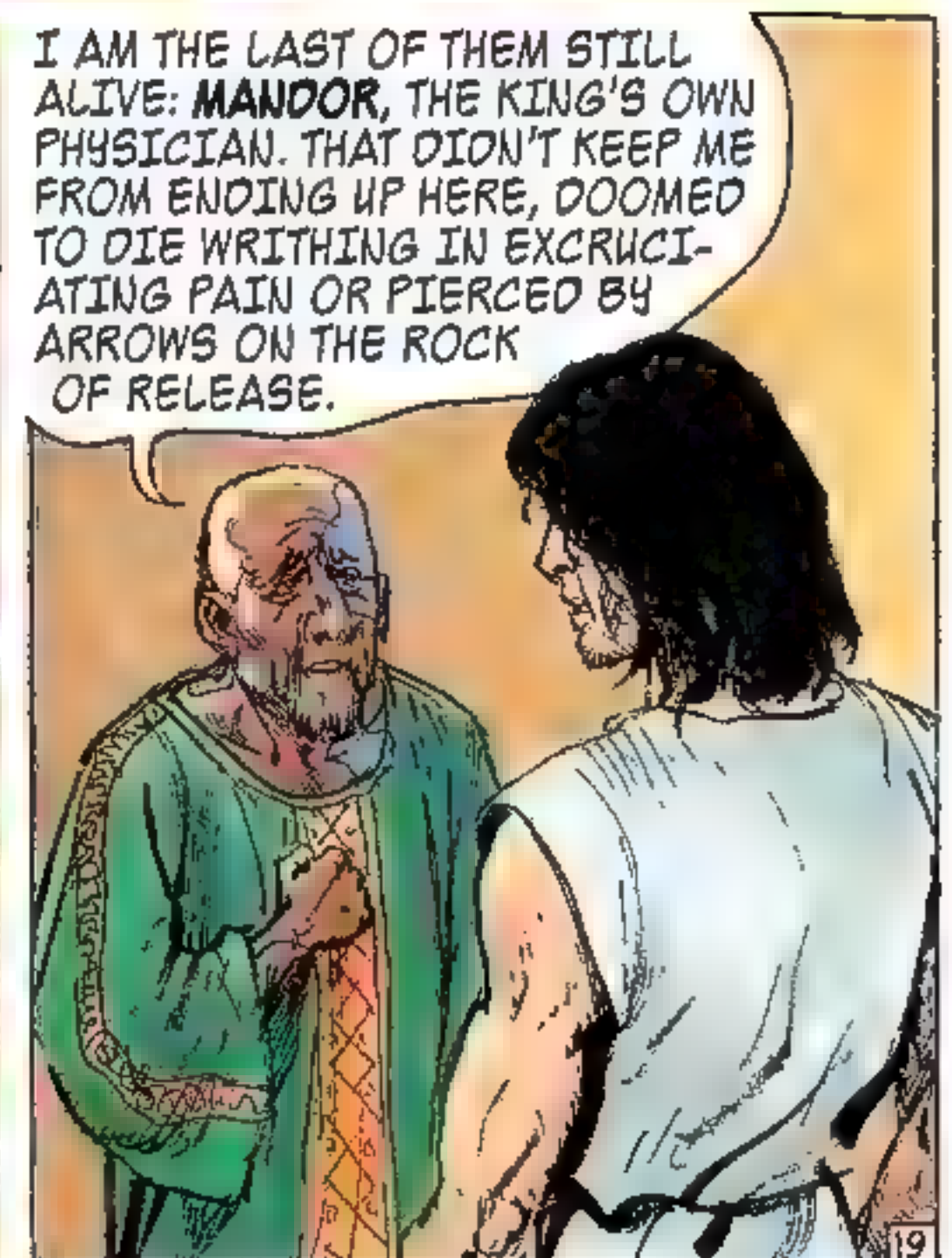


INDEED IT IS. BUT WHAT IS TRULY REVOLTING, MY FRIEND, IS THAT THE GODS ALLOWED THIS EPIDEMIC TO STRIKE OUR POOR PEOPLE.

IS THERE REALLY NO CURE?

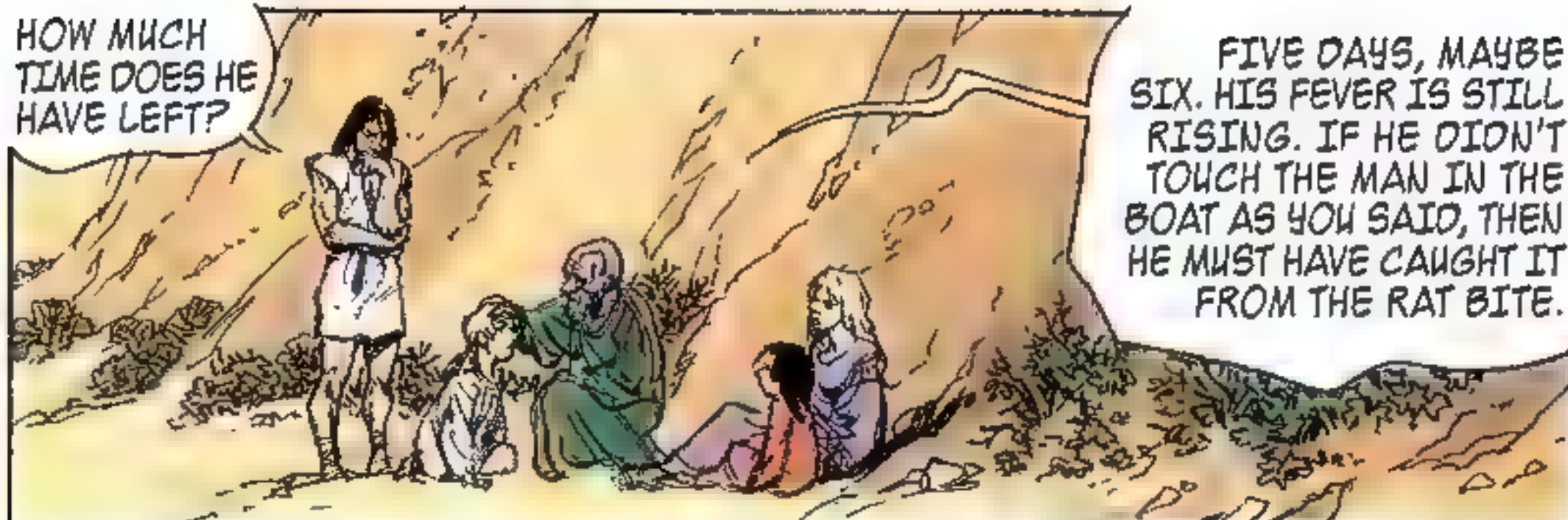


EVERY PHYSICIAN IN THE REALM HAS LOOKED FOR ONE. AND ALL HAVE BEEN CONTAMINATED WITHOUT HAVING FOUND ANYTHING.



I AM THE LAST OF THEM STILL ALIVE: MANDOR, THE KING'S OWN PHYSICIAN. THAT DIDN'T KEEP ME FROM ENDING UP HERE, DOOMED TO DIE WRITHING IN EXCRUCIATING PAIN OR PIERCED BY ARROWS ON THE ROCK OF RELEASE.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES HE HAVE LEFT?



FIVE DAYS, MAYBE SIX. HIS FEVER IS STILL RISING. IF HE DIDN'T TOUCH THE MAN IN THE BOAT AS YOU SAID, THEN HE MUST HAVE CAUGHT IT FROM THE RAT BITE.

YOUR WIFE WILL DIE IN EIGHT DAYS, THORGAL. AS FOR YOU AND YOUR LITTLE GIRL, IT WILL DEPEND ON WHEN THE DISEASE BREAKS OUT. THE BLUE PLAGUE CONTAMINATES THROUGH SIMPLE PHYSICAL CONTACT.



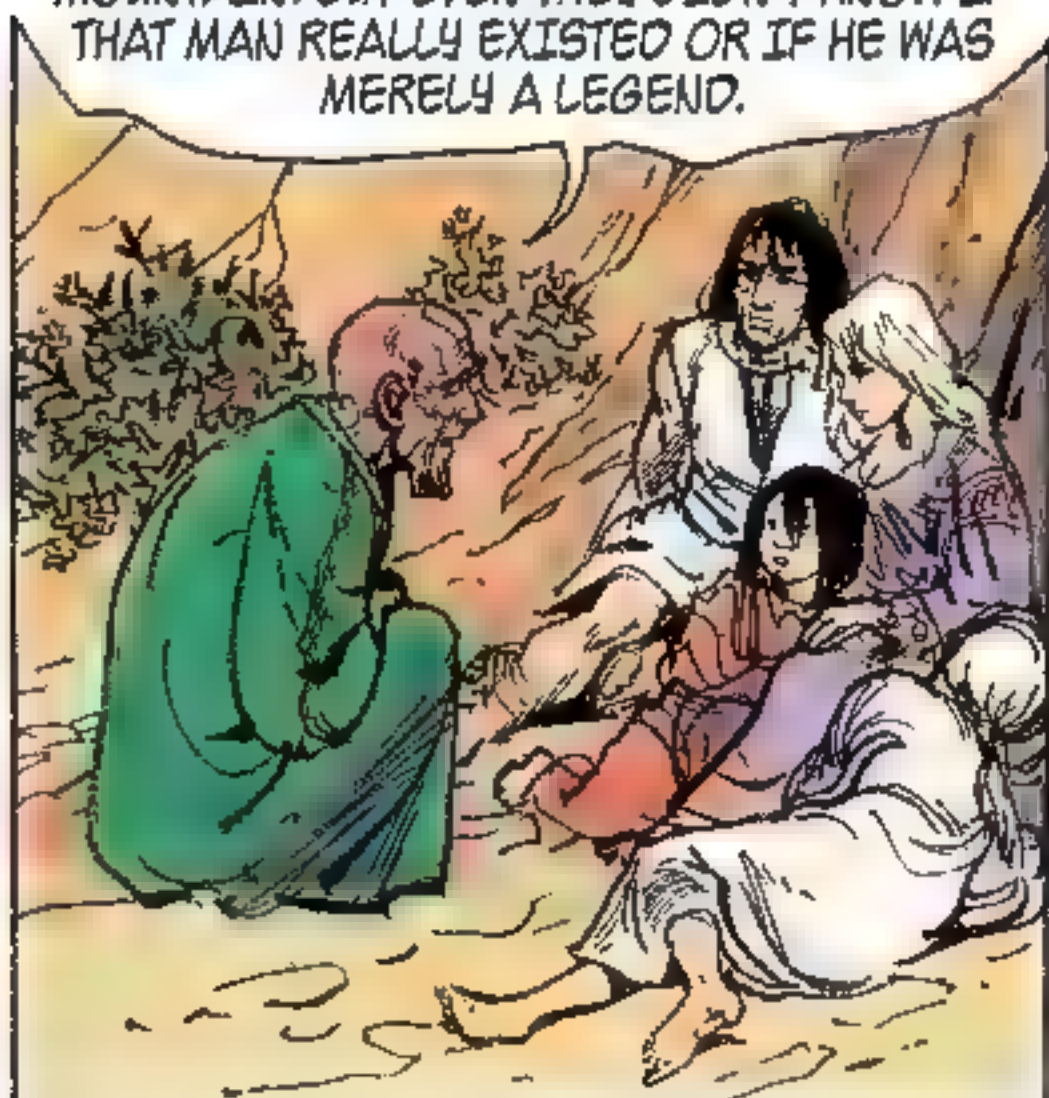
I CANNOT ACCEPT THAT.

DO YOU HEAR ME?! I DO NOT ACCEPT THAT! THERE HAS TO BE A WAY, A CURE, ANYTHING! THERE HAS TO BE ONE!!

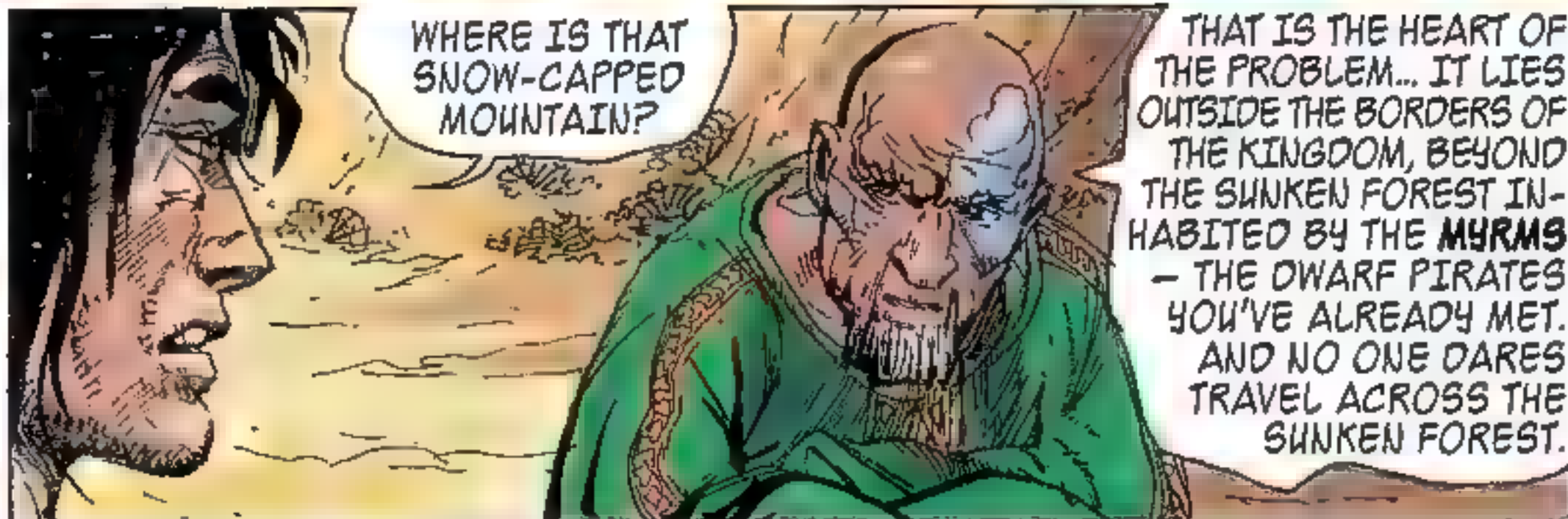


IF THERE IS ONE, THEN IT IS OUT OF REACH. FOR US, AT LEAST.

WHEN I WAS STUDYING MEDICINE, MY MASTERS OFTEN SPOKE OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN OF SCIENCE. A SORT OF MAGE WHO COULD CURE ALL AFFLICTIONS, WHO LIVED AS A HERMIT SOMEWHERE ON THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN. BUT EVEN THEY DIDN'T KNOW IF THAT MAN REALLY EXISTED OR IF HE WAS MERELY A LEGEND.



WHERE IS THAT SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN?



THAT IS THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM... IT LIES OUTSIDE THE BORDERS OF THE KINGDOM, BEYOND THE SUNKEN FOREST INHABITED BY THE MYRMS - THE DWARF PIRATES YOU'VE ALREADY MET. AND NO ONE DARES TRAVEL ACROSS THE SUNKEN FOREST.

NOT EVEN THE SOLDIERS OF PRINCE ZARKAJ? WE SAW THAT THE MYRMS FEAR THEM.



TRUE, THE PRINCE'S MEN COULD CROSS THE SUNKEN FOREST. OR EVEN BETTER, RIDE AROUND IT. ALAS, ZARKAJ IS A SHALLOW MAN WHO ONLY THINKS OF HIS OWN PLEASURES AND CARES LITTLE ABOUT THE SUFFERING OF HIS PEOPLE.

AND THE KING?



THE KING IS OLD. AND DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT ARMENOS - THE SCIENTIST IN QUESTION - EXISTS.

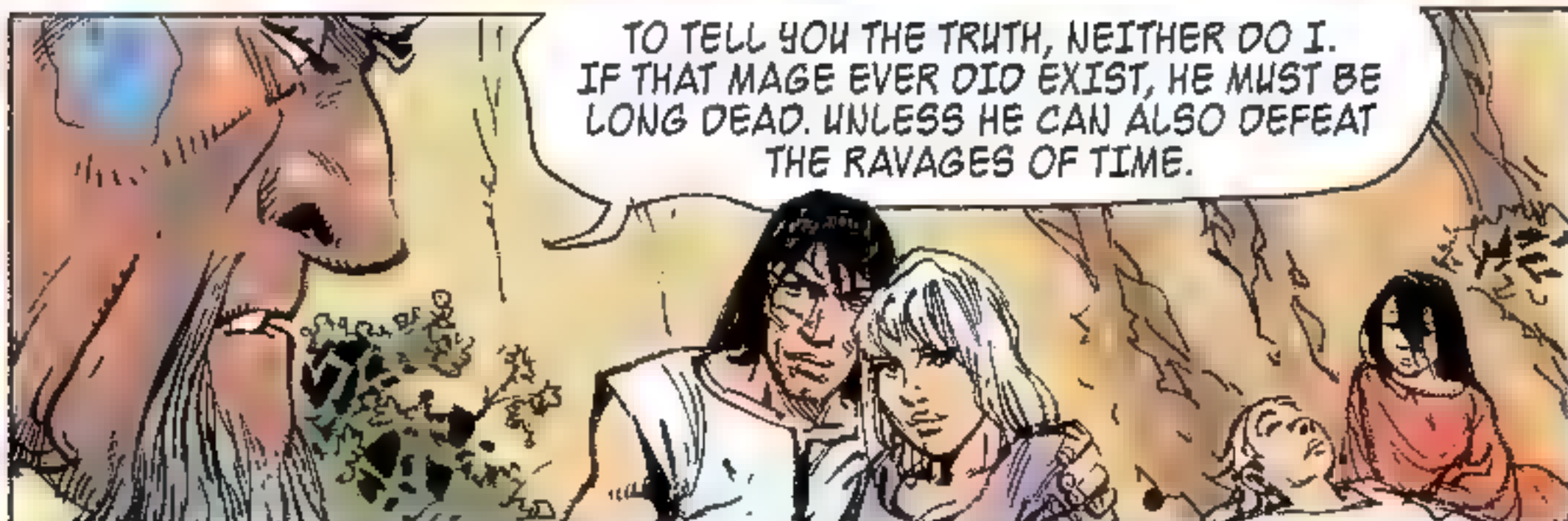
LEGEND OR NOT, IF THERE IS EVEN A TINY CHANCE THAT THIS ARMENOS EXISTS AND IS STILL ALIVE, I SHALL FIND HIM AND BRING HIM BACK.



REALLY? YOU FORGET ONE SMALL DETAIL, THORGAL. HOW WILL YOU MAKE YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS CANYON?

THERE MIGHT BE A WAY...

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, NEITHER DO I. IF THAT MAGE EVER DID EXIST, HE MUST BE LONG DEAD. UNLESS HE CAN ALSO DEFEAT THE RAVAGES OF TIME.



THAT SMALL RIVER WE SAW EARLIER... WHERE DOES IT COME FROM AND WHERE DOES IT GO?

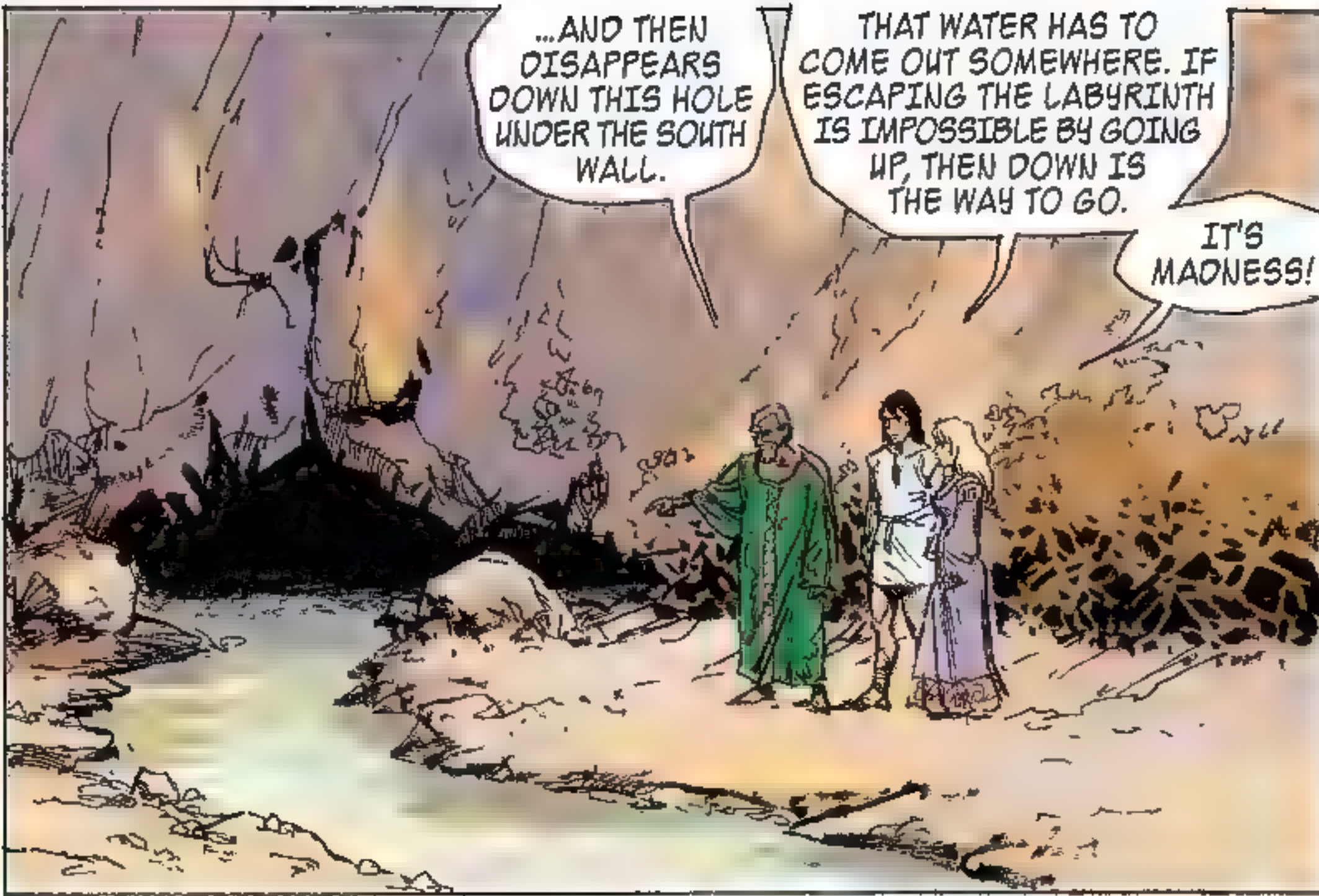
IT FLOWS OUT OF THE WALL AT THE NORTHERN END OF THE CANYON, OVER THERE...



...AND THEN DISAPPEARS DOWN THIS HOLE UNDER THE SOUTH WALL.

THAT WATER HAS TO COME OUT SOMEWHERE. IF ESCAPING THE LABYRINTH IS IMPOSSIBLE BY GOING UP, THEN DOWN IS THE WAY TO GO.

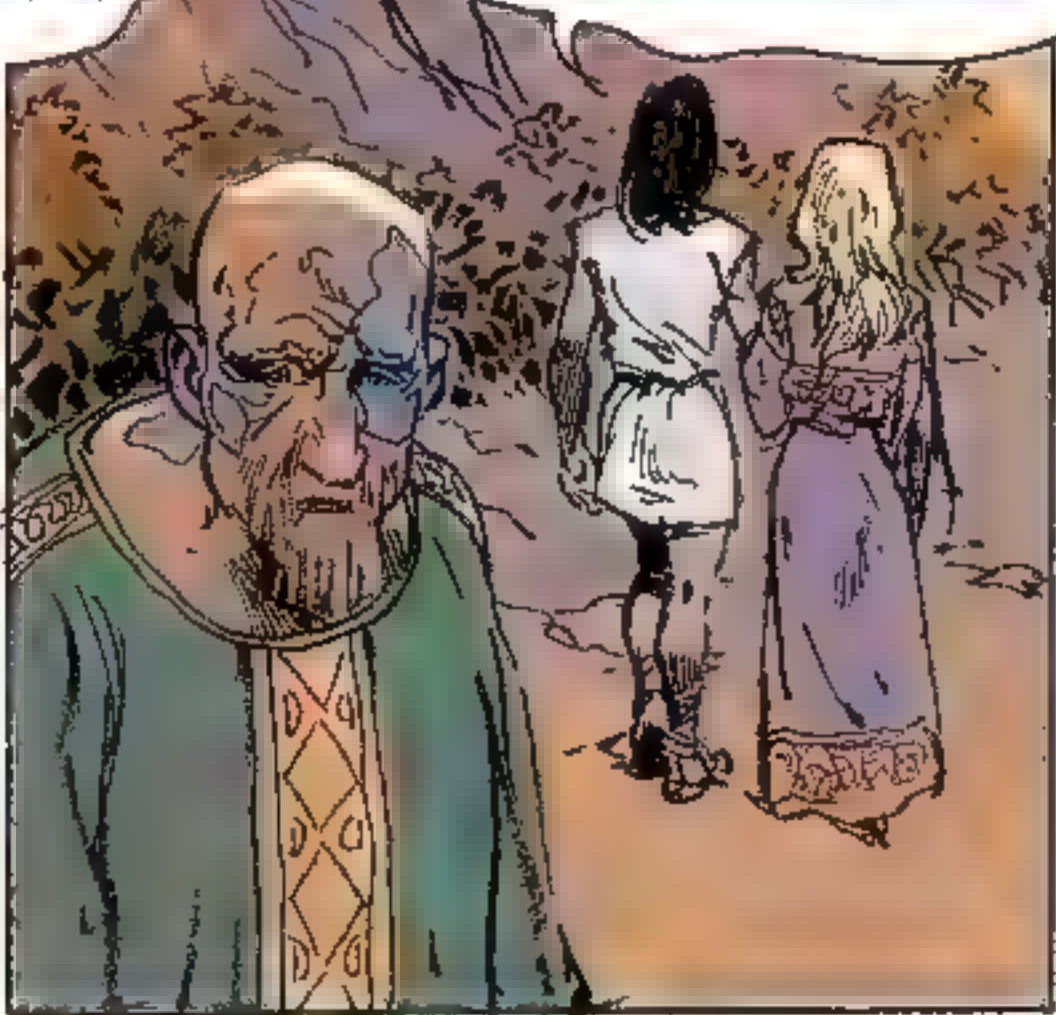
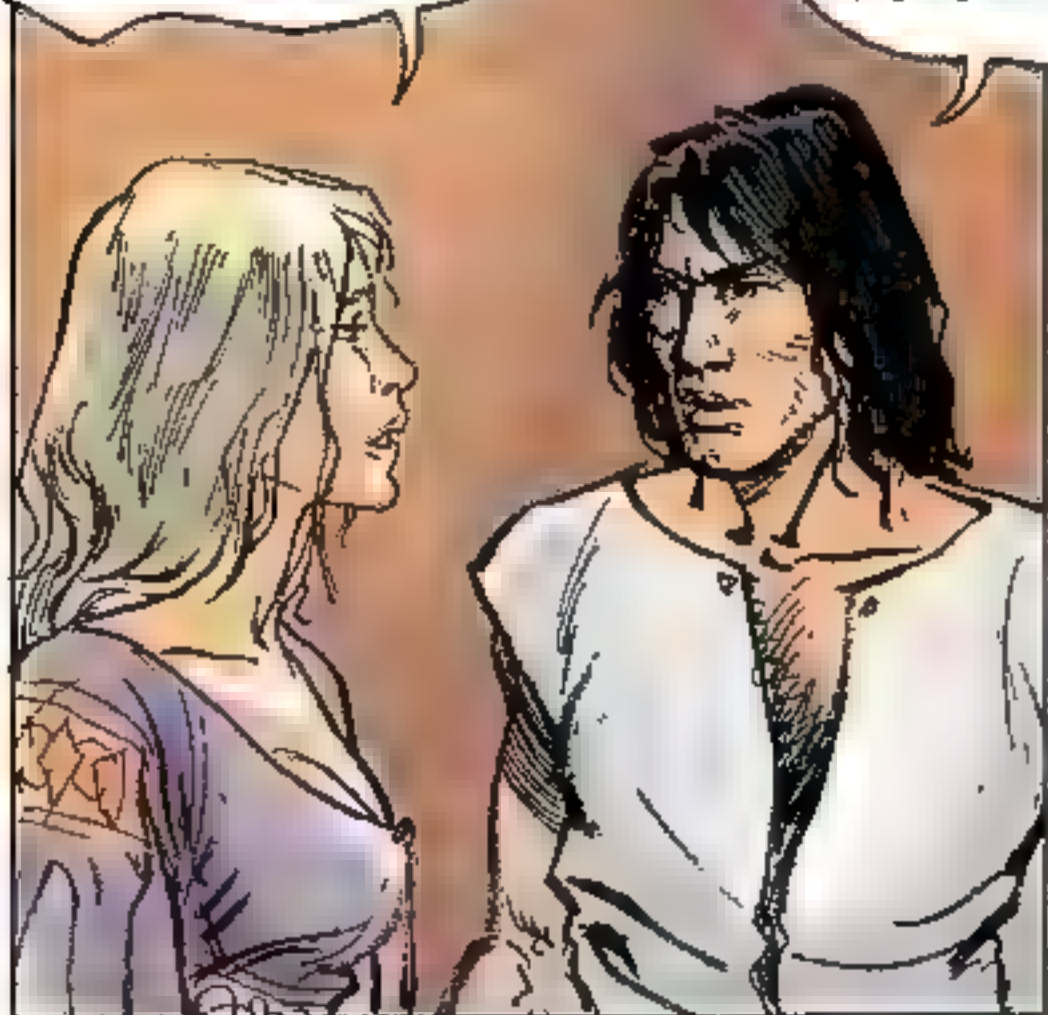
IT'S MADNESS!



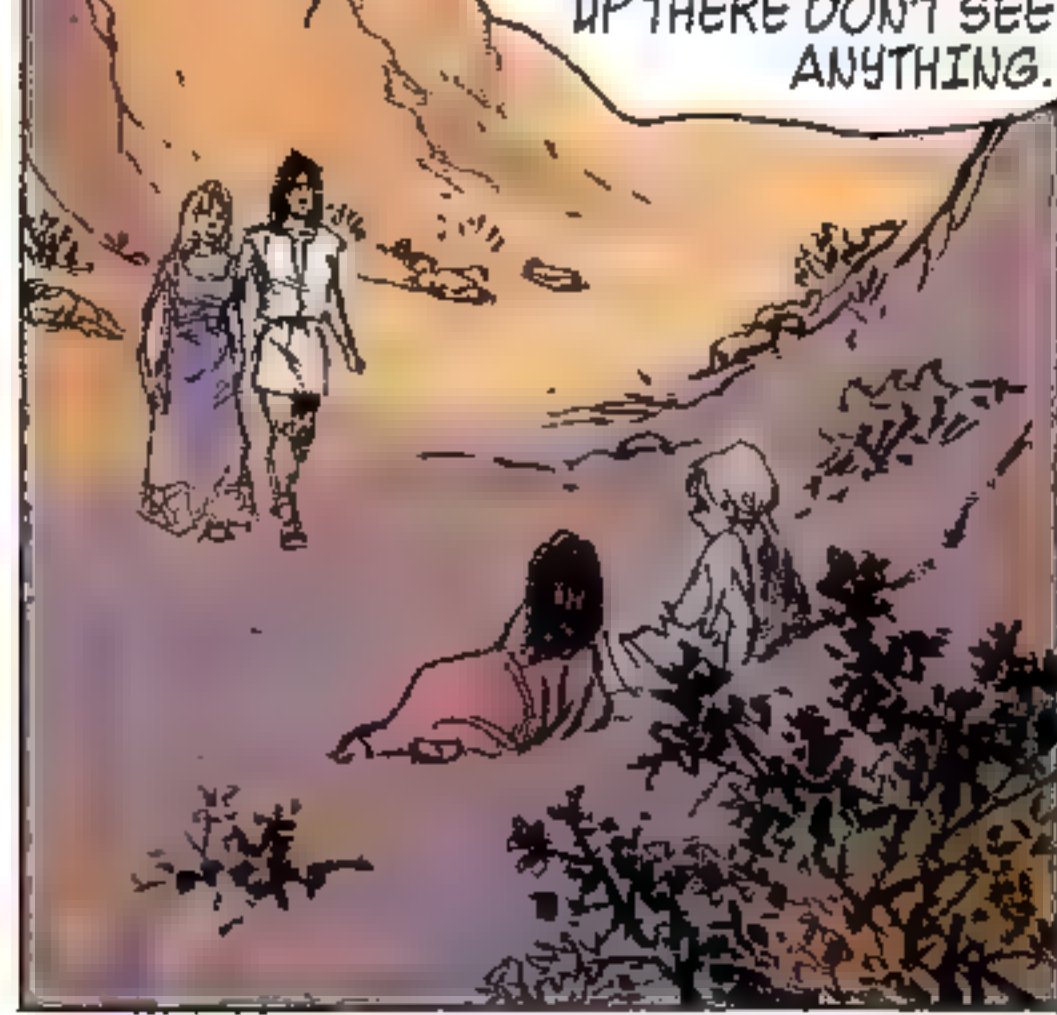
THAT STREAM COULD RUN UNDERGROUND FOR THOUSANDS OF FEET. EVEN WORSE, IT COULD JUST SEEP INTO SAND. IF YOU DON'T DROWN, YOU'LL SUFFOCATE.

THE ONLY MADNESS WOULD BE TO STAY HERE, PATIENTLY WAITING FOR DEATH. I'D RATHER WALK TOWARDS IT AND TRY TO BEAT IT.

EVERY FIBRE OF MY HEART, MY FLESH, EVERY DROP OF MY BLOOD IS SCREAMING AT ME TO STAY WITH YOU, MY BELOVED. YOU, JOLAN AND WOLFCUB, TO SUPPORT YOU THROUGH THE HARDSHIPS TO COME.

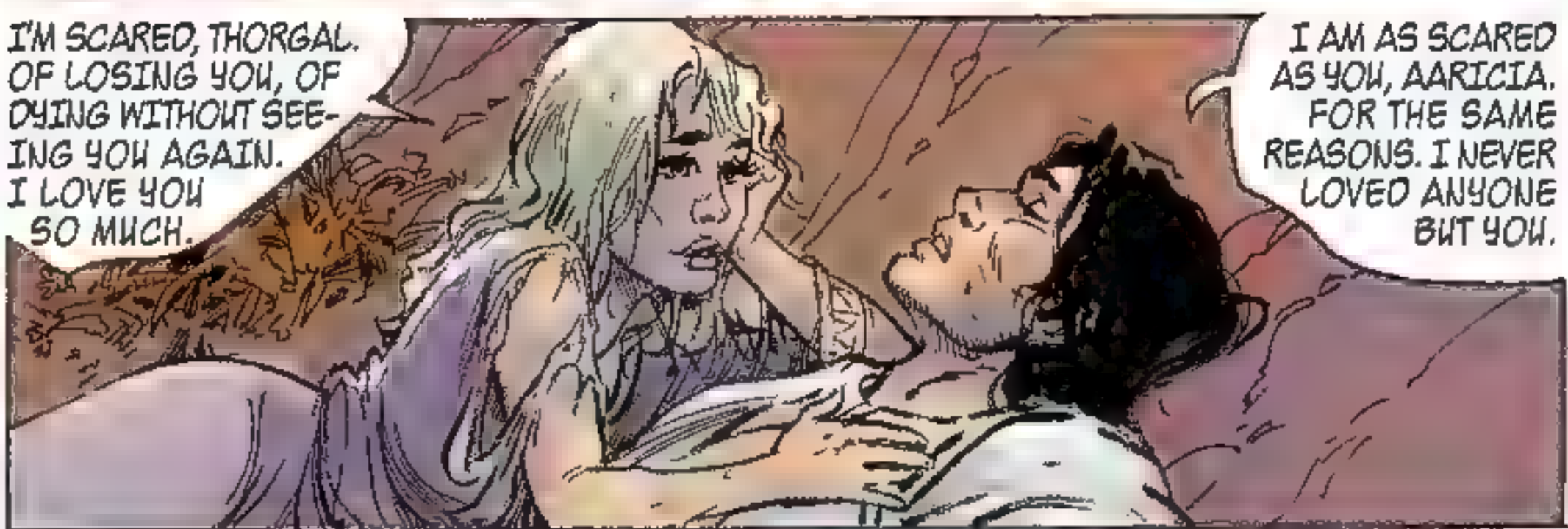


BUT MY HEAD TELLS ME TO GRASP AT EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE TO SAVE US, NO MATTER HOW MINUSCULE. I'LL LEAVE AS SOON AS IT'S DARK. BETTER IF THE SLAVES UP THERE DON'T SEE ANYTHING.



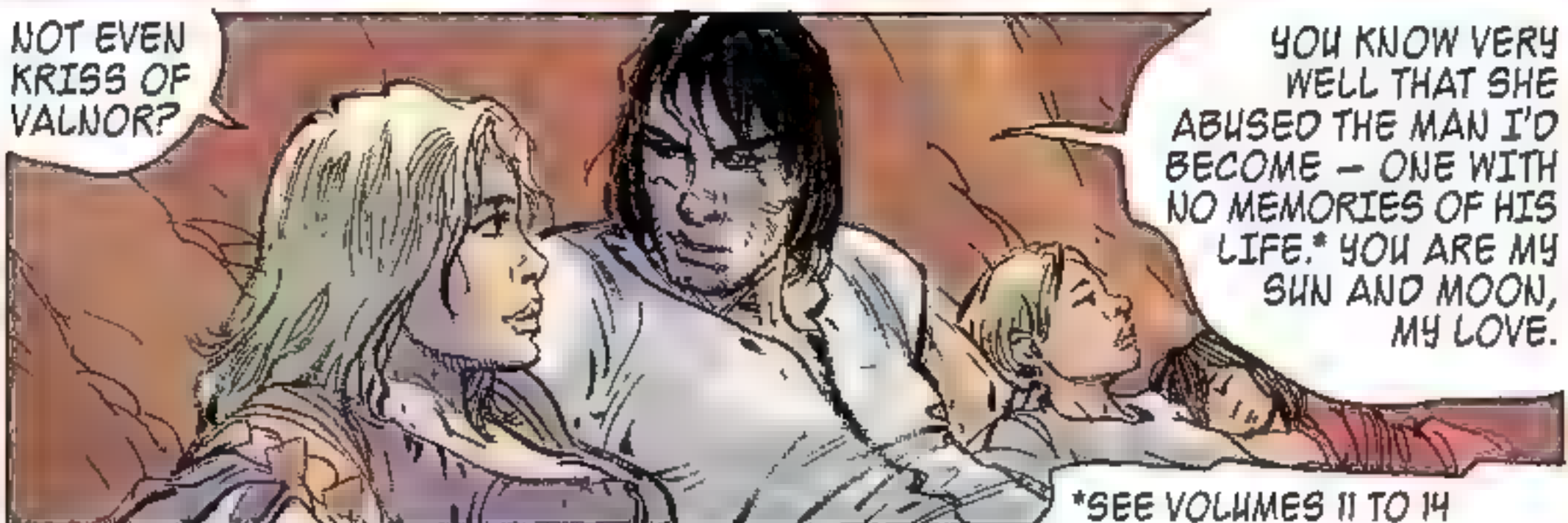
I'M SCARED, THORGAL. OF LOSING YOU, OF DYING WITHOUT SEEING YOU AGAIN. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH.

I AM AS SCARED AS YOU, AARICIA. FOR THE SAME REASONS. I NEVER LOVED ANYONE BUT YOU.



NOT EVEN KRISS OF VALNOR?

YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT SHE ABUSED THE MAN I'D BECOME - ONE WITH NO MEMORIES OF HIS LIFE.* YOU ARE MY SUN AND MOON, MY LOVE.



*SEE VOLUMES 11 TO 14



NIGHT HAD FALLEN, AND ALL THE LABY-
RINTH'S MISERABLE PRISONERS, WARNED
BY AN INTANGIBLE RUMOUR, HAD COME
TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE MADMAN'S
ATTEMPT - THE MADMAN WHO WANTED
AT ALL COSTS TO DEFEAT THE ILLNESS
THAT ENCOMPASSED THEIR DOOM.

BUT THEY DIDN'T THINK
HE'D SUCCEED. NO ONE
DID.

HOLD ON, NO MATTER WHAT. IF
I'M NOT BACK IN FIVE DAYS, IT'LL
MEAN I'VE FAILED. IN THAT CASE,
YOU'LL BE FREE TO CHOOSE
THE ROCK OF RELEASE. BUT
PROMISE ME YOU'LL HOLD ON
FOR AT LEAST FIVE DAYS.

ESPECIALLY
YOU, JOLAN.
IT'LL BE
HARDEST
FOR YOU.

I'LL HOLD
ON, THORGAL.
I PROMISE YOU.

EVEN IF YOU SUCCEED IN
REACHING THE SNOW-CAPPED
MOUNTAIN, YOU WON'T MAKE IT
BACK IN FIVE DAYS. IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE.

DON'T TELL ANY-
ONE, THEN. GOOD-
BYE, MANDOR.

MY STORY ENDS HERE.
MY FATHER WAS THORGAL
AND MY MOTHER WAS
PRINCESS AARICIA.

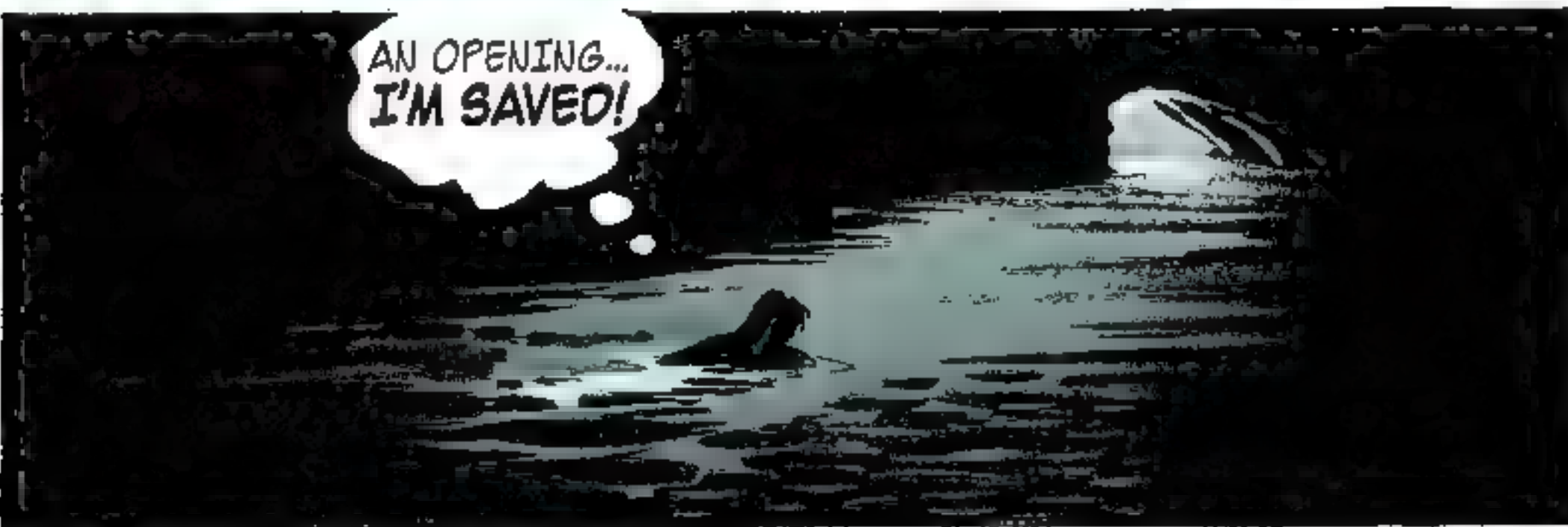
ME, MY NAME IS JOLAN.
I'M TWELVE, AND I'M
ALREADY DEAD.



HOLD ON...
I MUST HOLD
ON...



AN UNDER-
GROUND LAKE!
AND OVER THERE,
IT LOOKS
LIKE...



AN OPENING...
I'M SAVED!

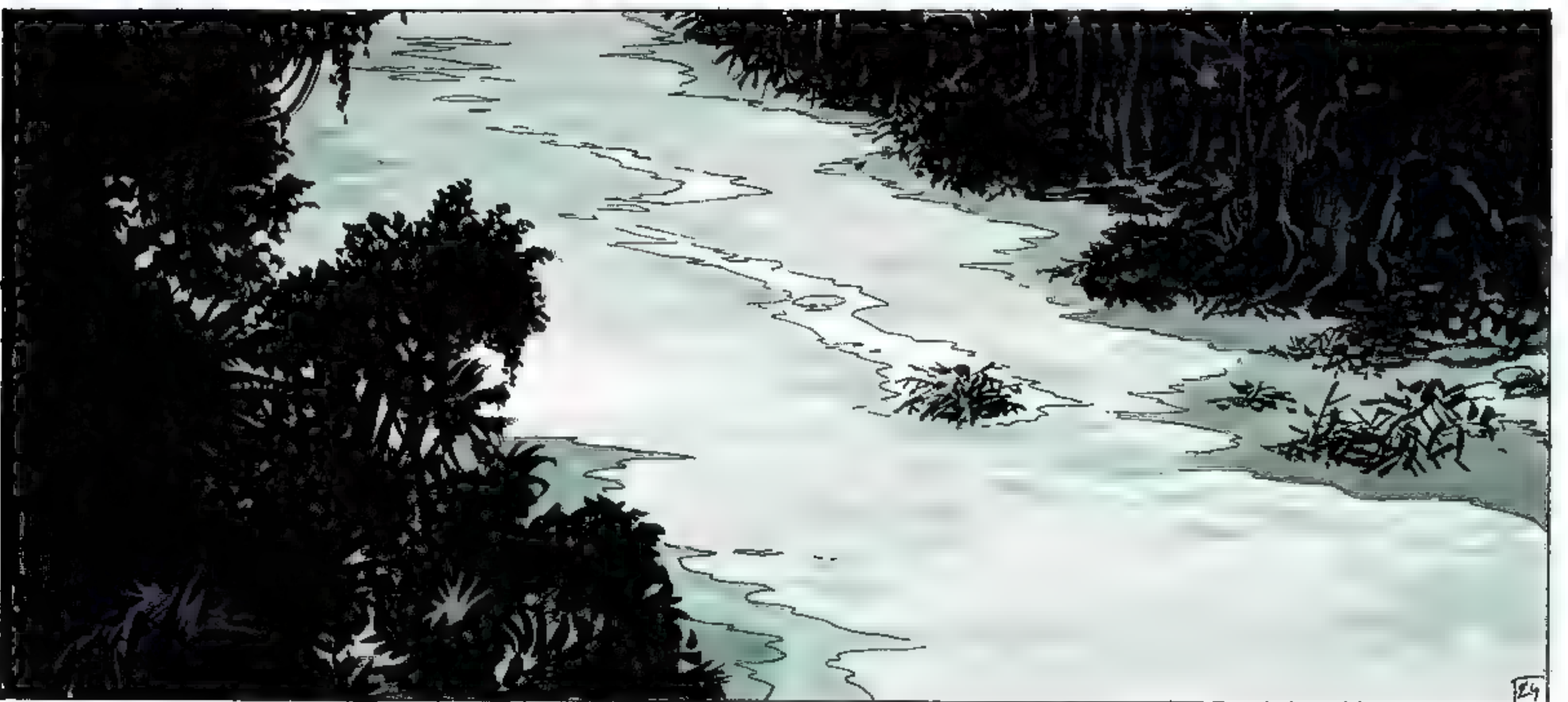
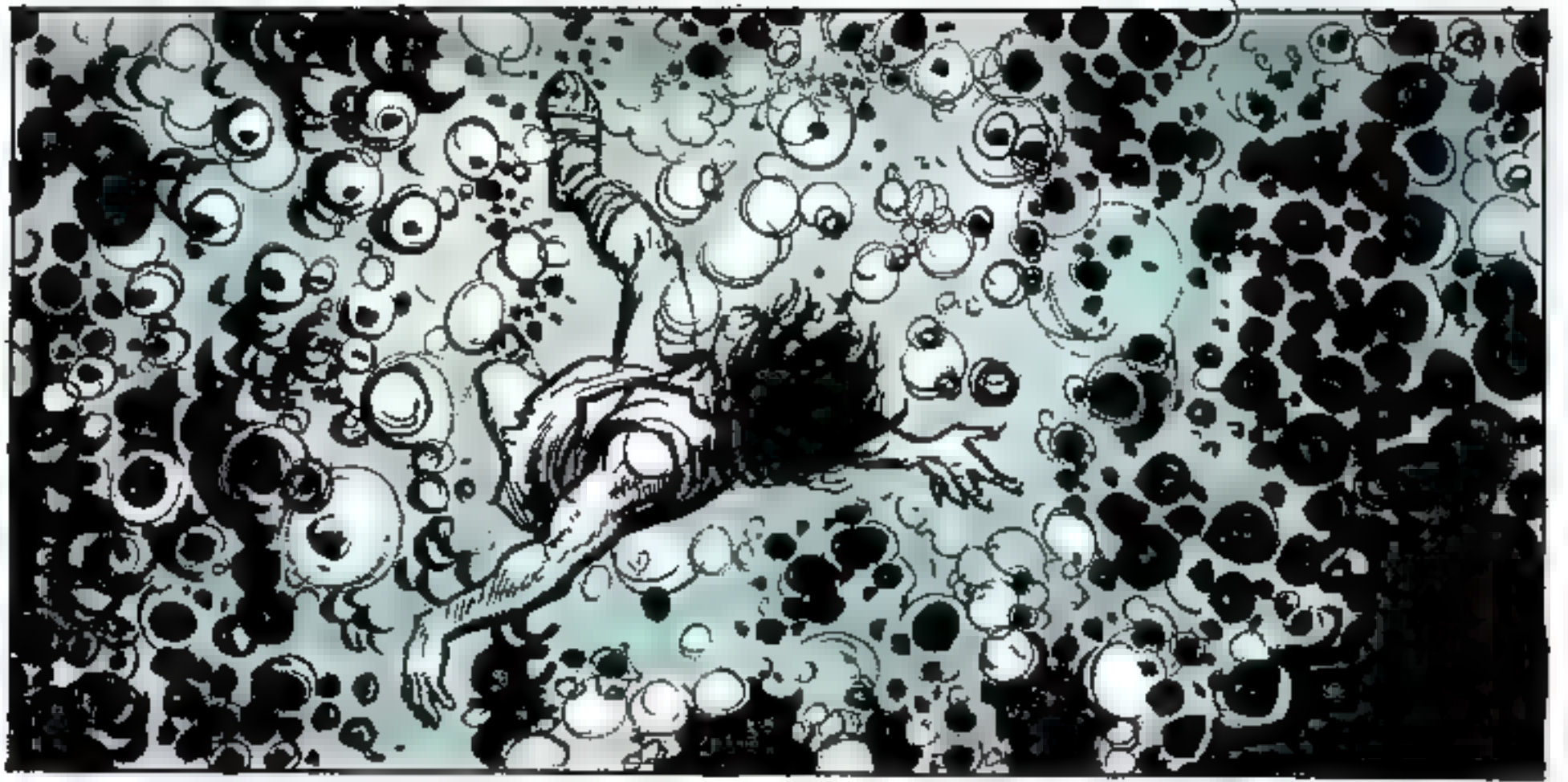


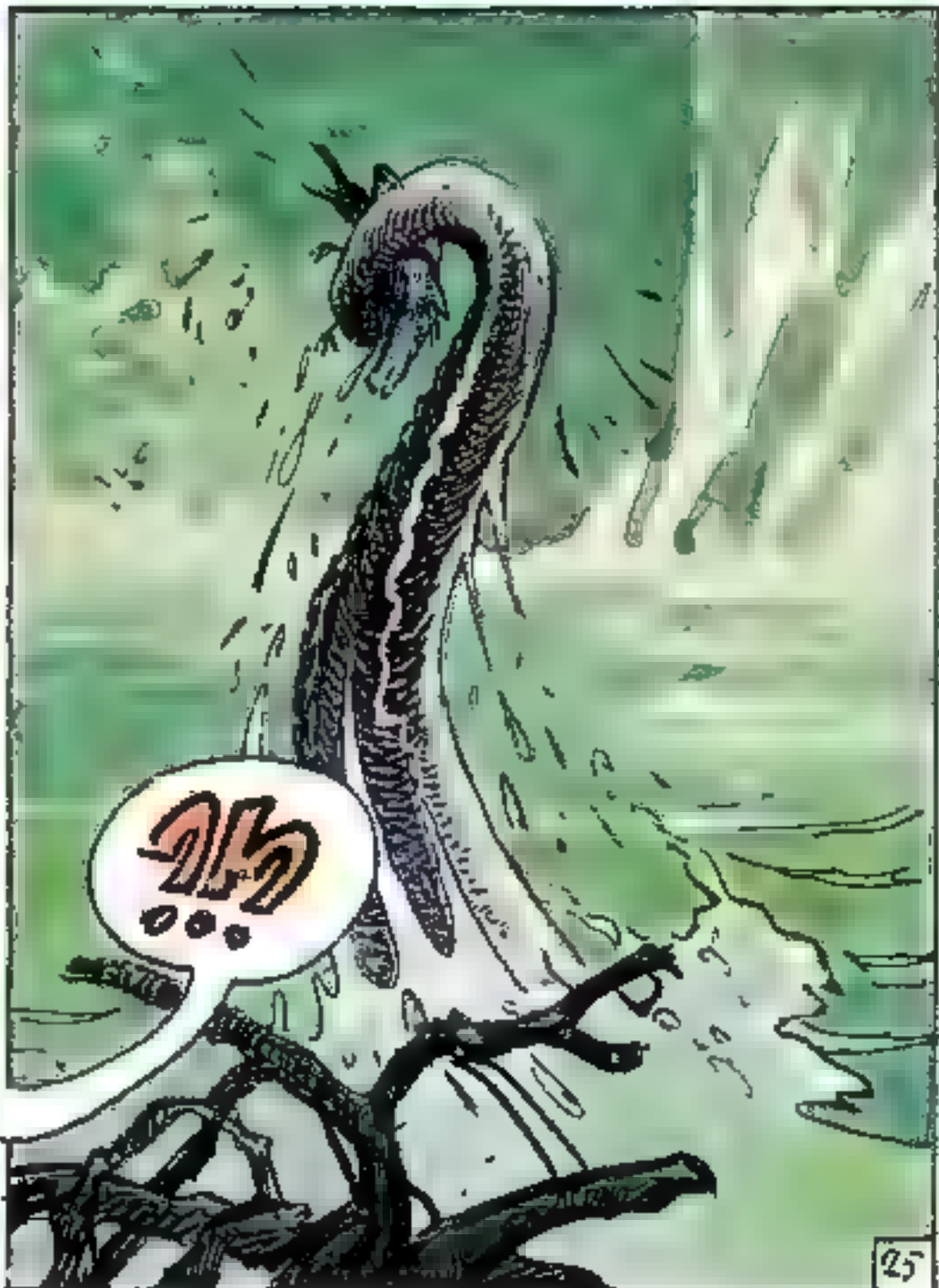
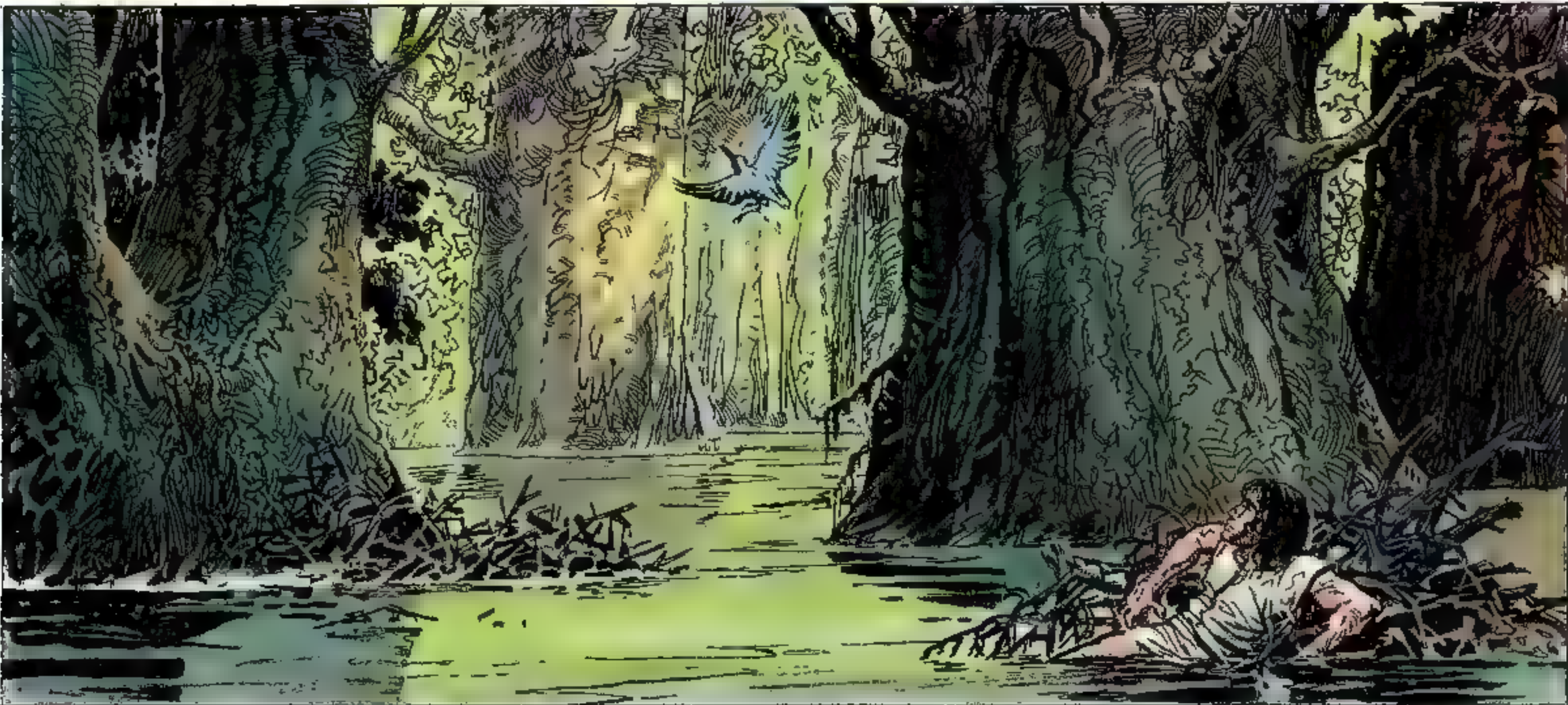
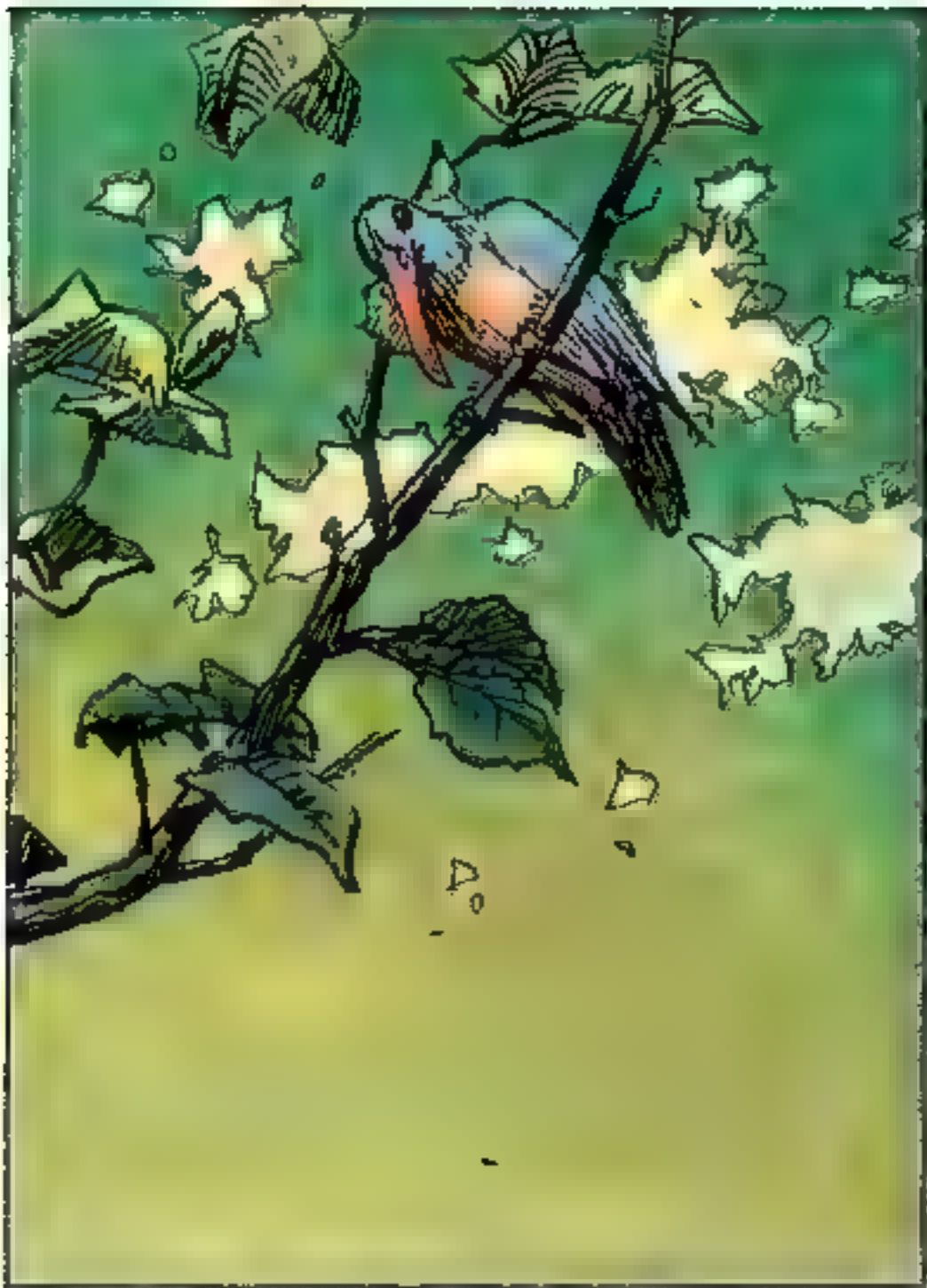
THE CURRENT... THE
ROARING SOUND...
IT CAN'T BE...

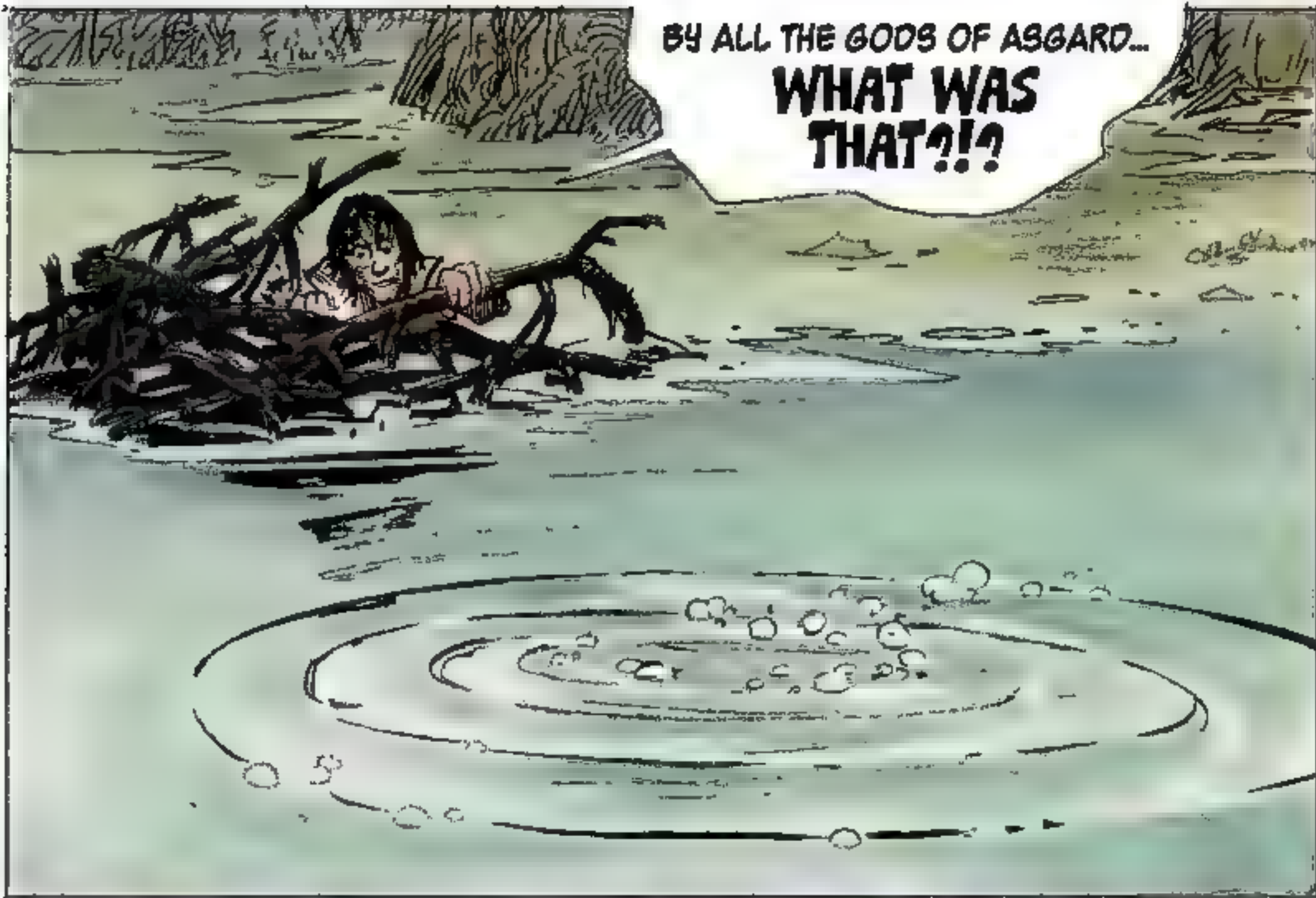
BRRRRBRRRR



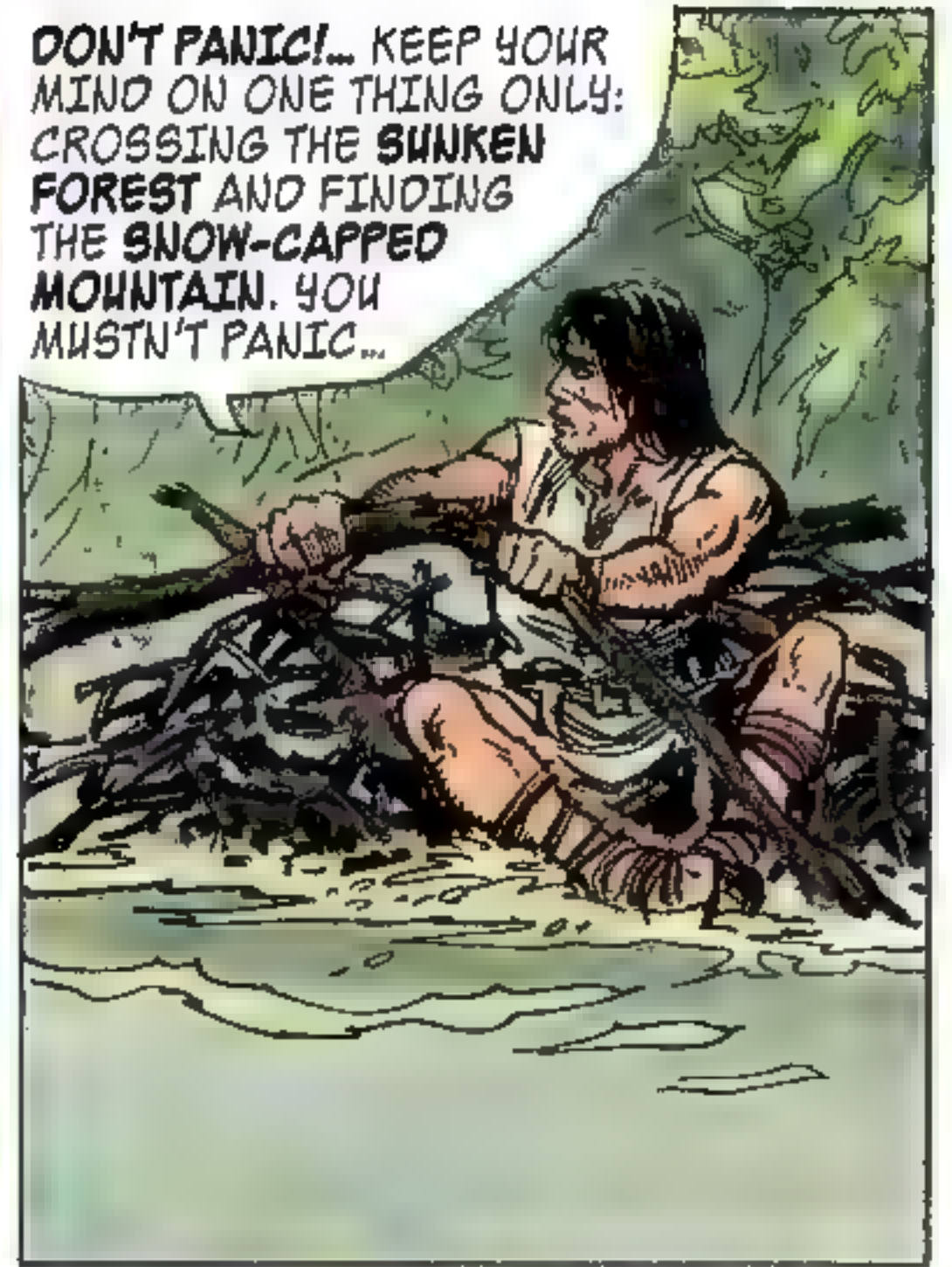
OOIN!
NO...
NOT THAT!...



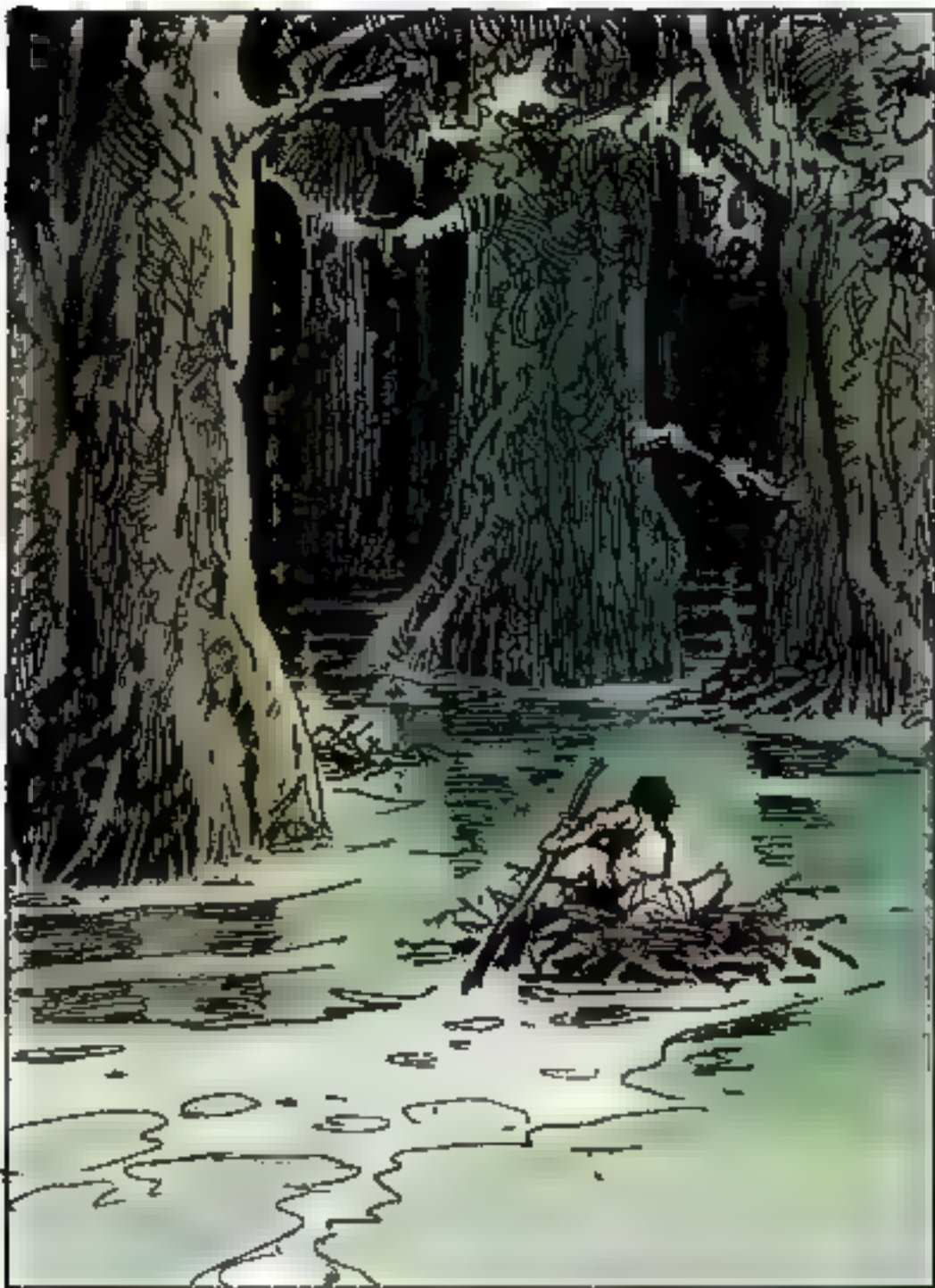




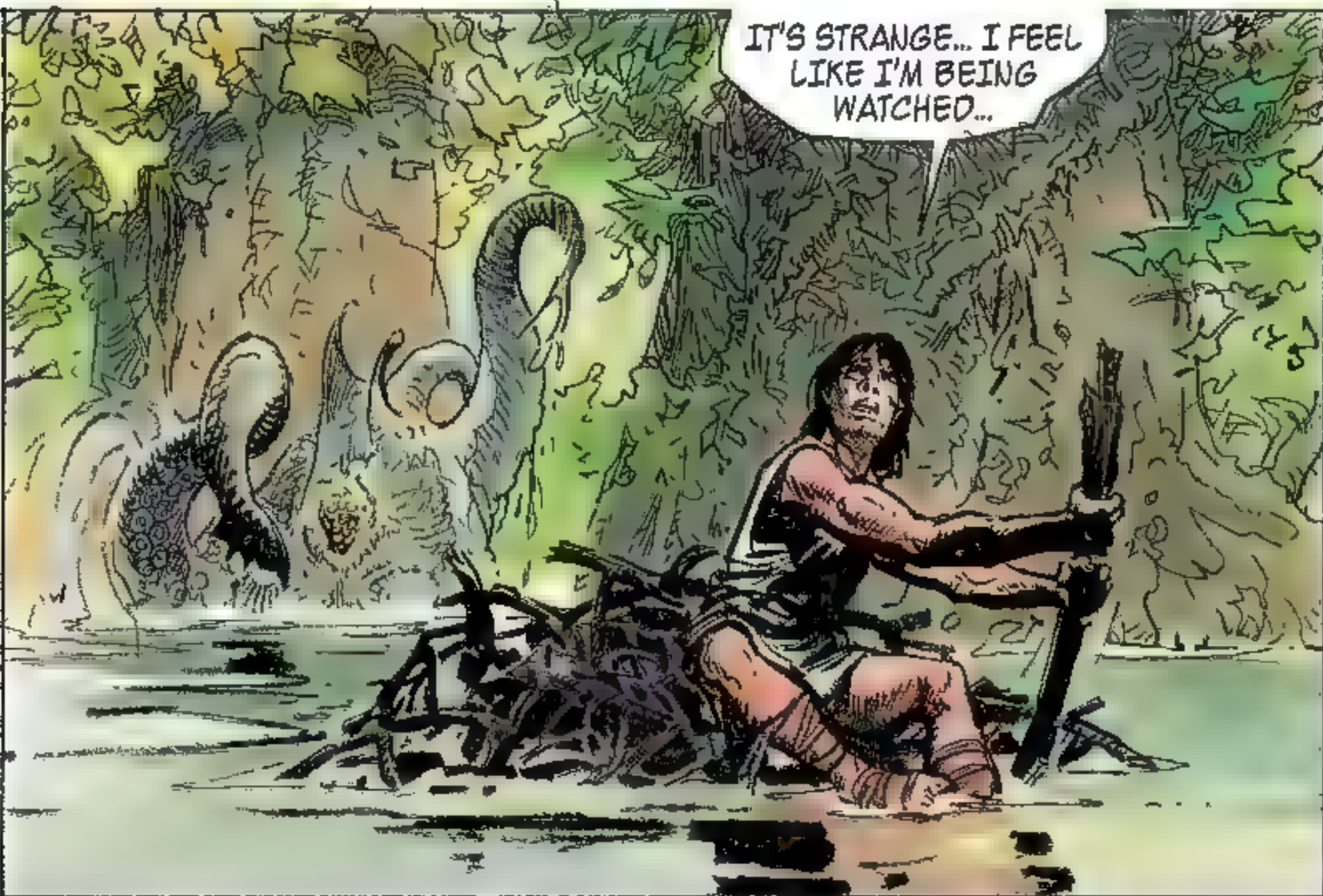
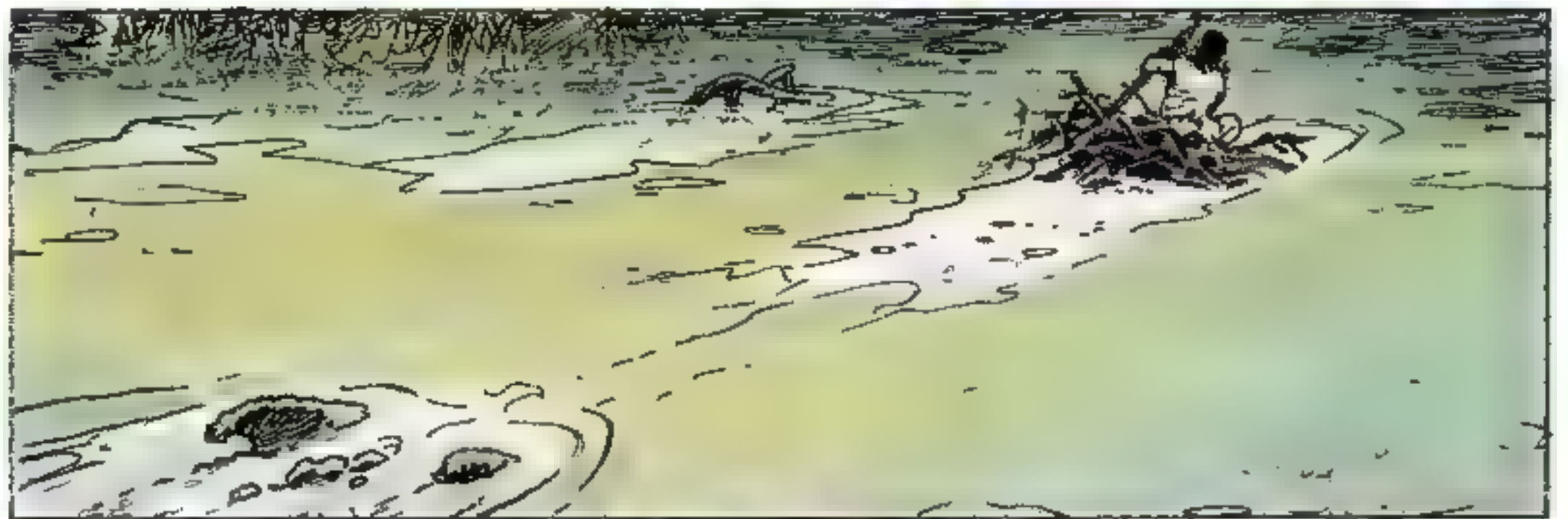
BY ALL THE GODS OF ASGARD...
WHAT WAS THAT?!?



DON'T PANIC!... KEEP YOUR MIND ON ONE THING ONLY: CROSSING THE SUNKEN FOREST AND FINDING THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN. YOU MUSTN'T PANIC...



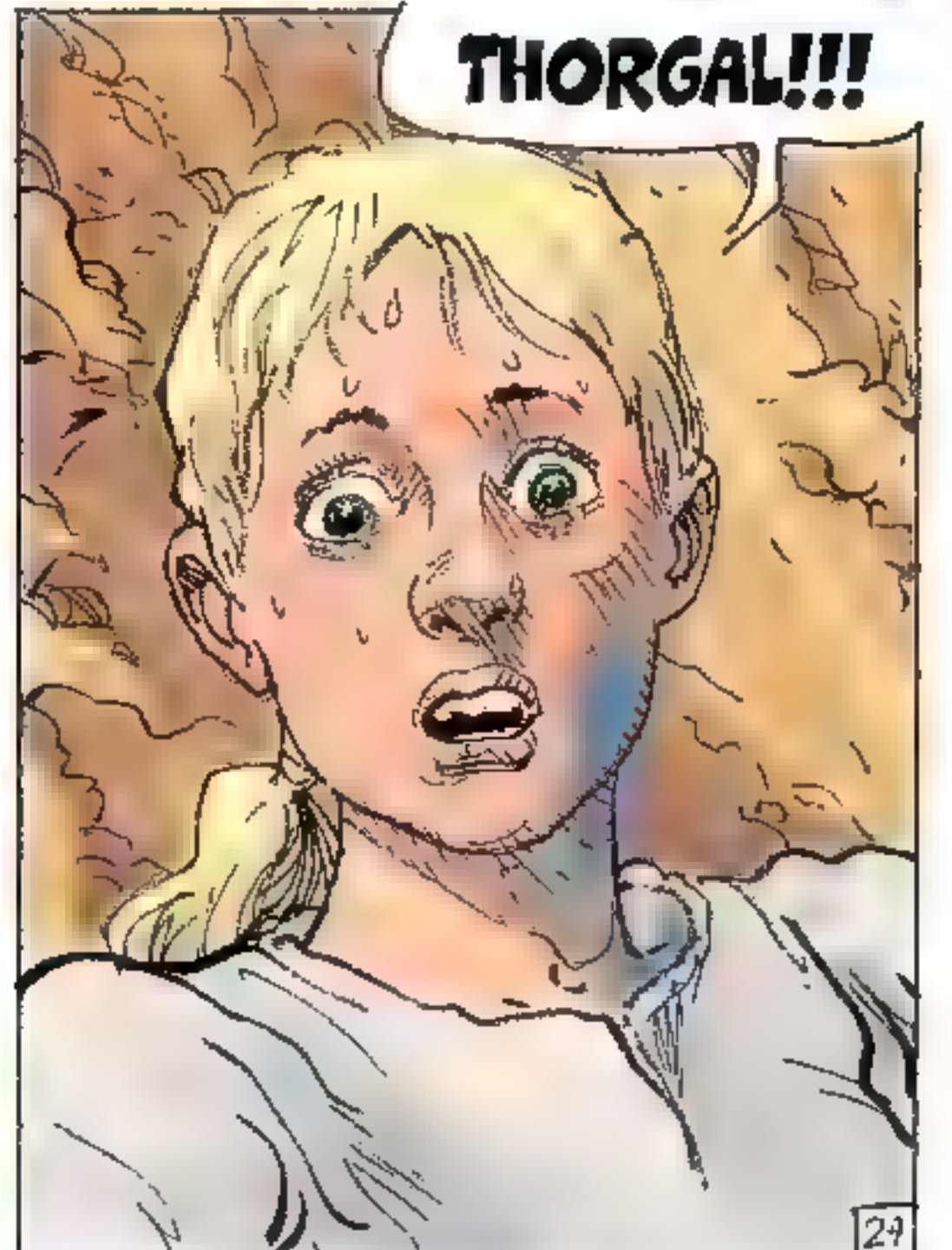
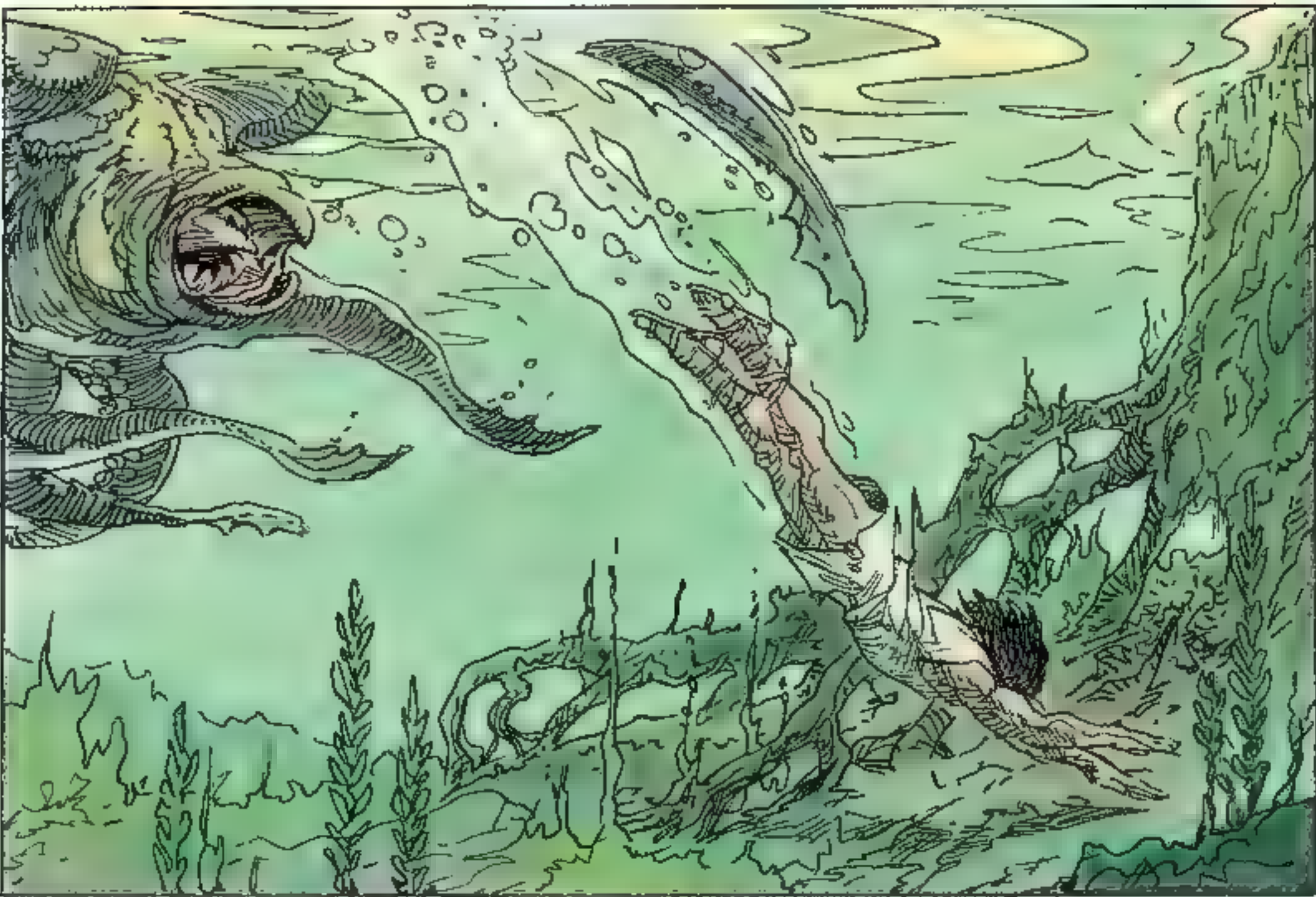
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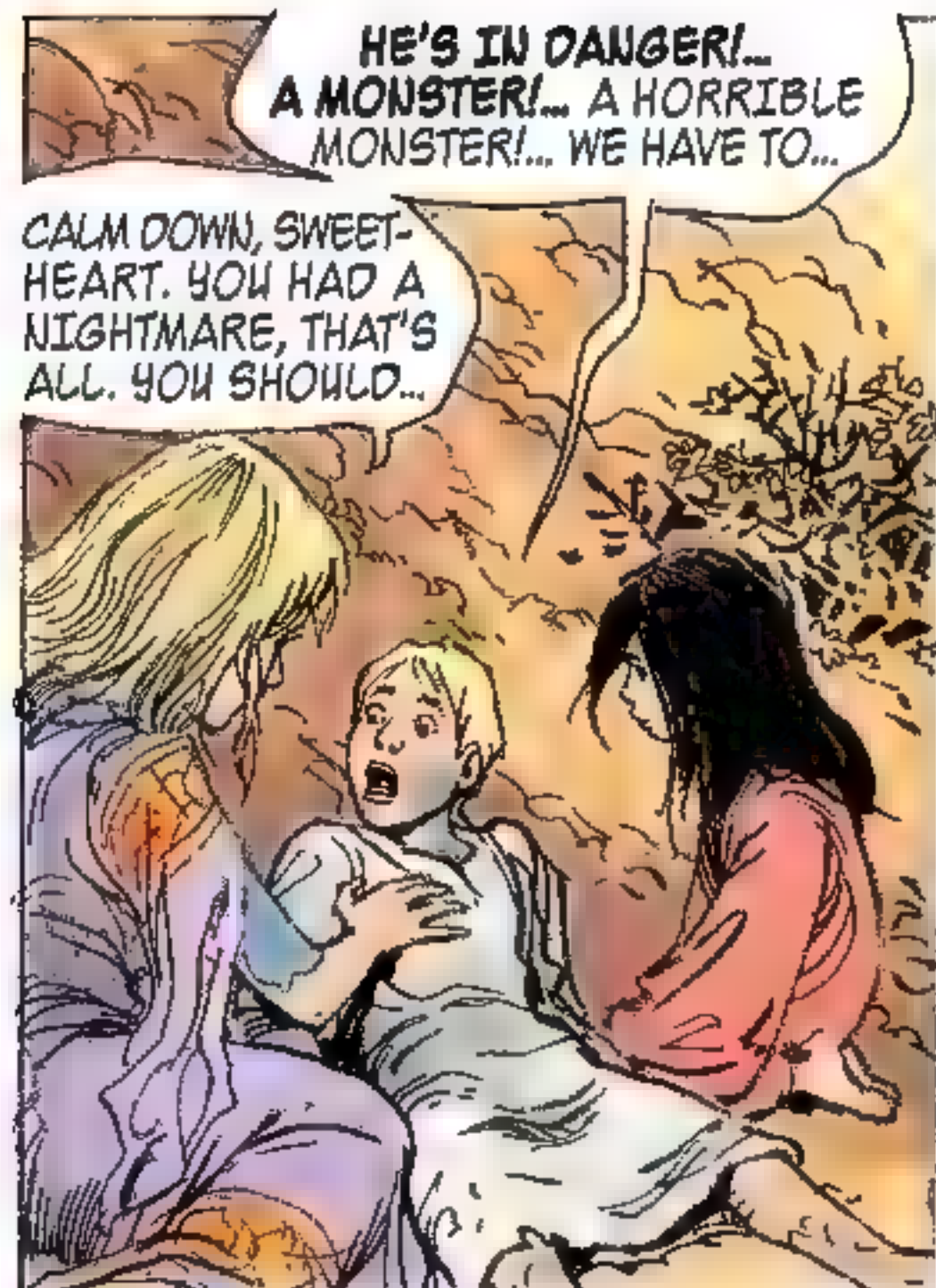


IT'S STRANGE... I FEEL LIKE I'M BEING WATCHED...



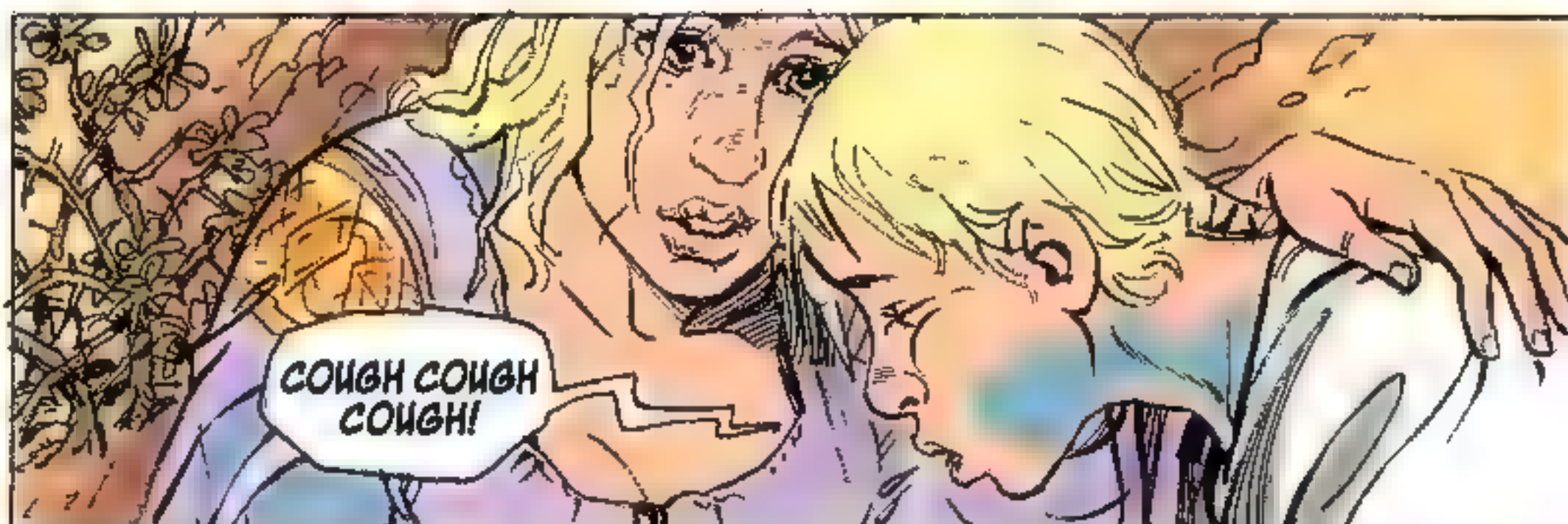
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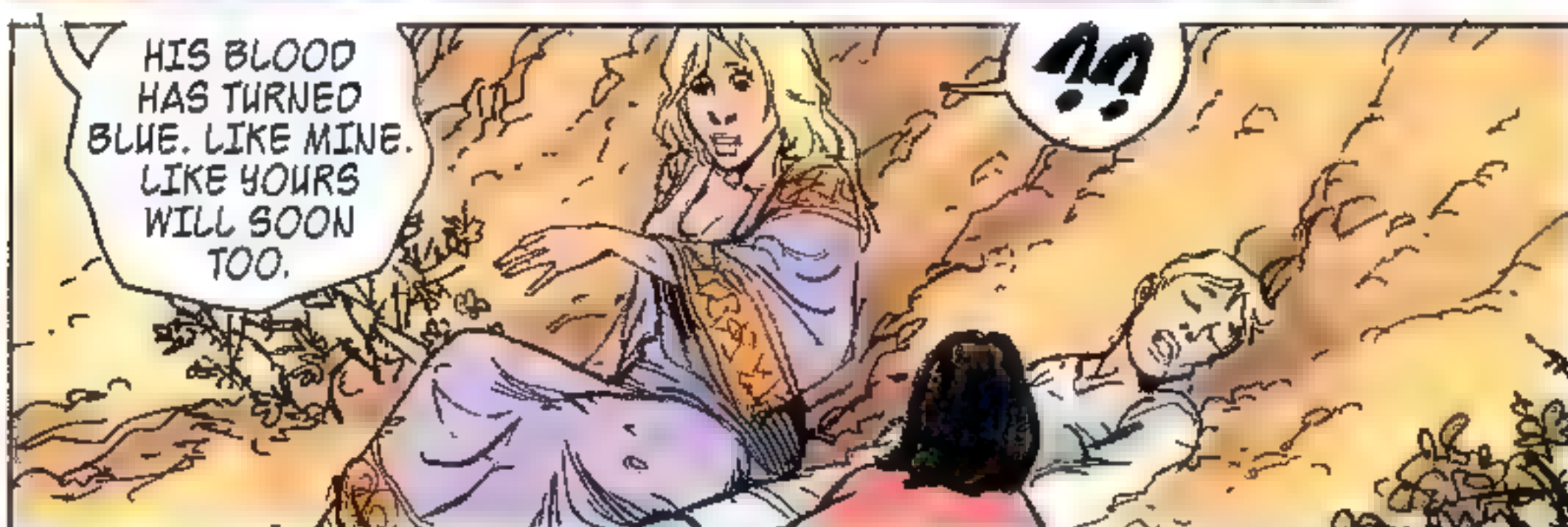


HE'S IN DANGER!...
A MONSTER!... A HORRIBLE
MONSTER!... WE HAVE TO...

CALM DOWN, SWEET-
HEART. YOU HAD A
NIGHTMARE, THAT'S
ALL. YOU SHOULD...

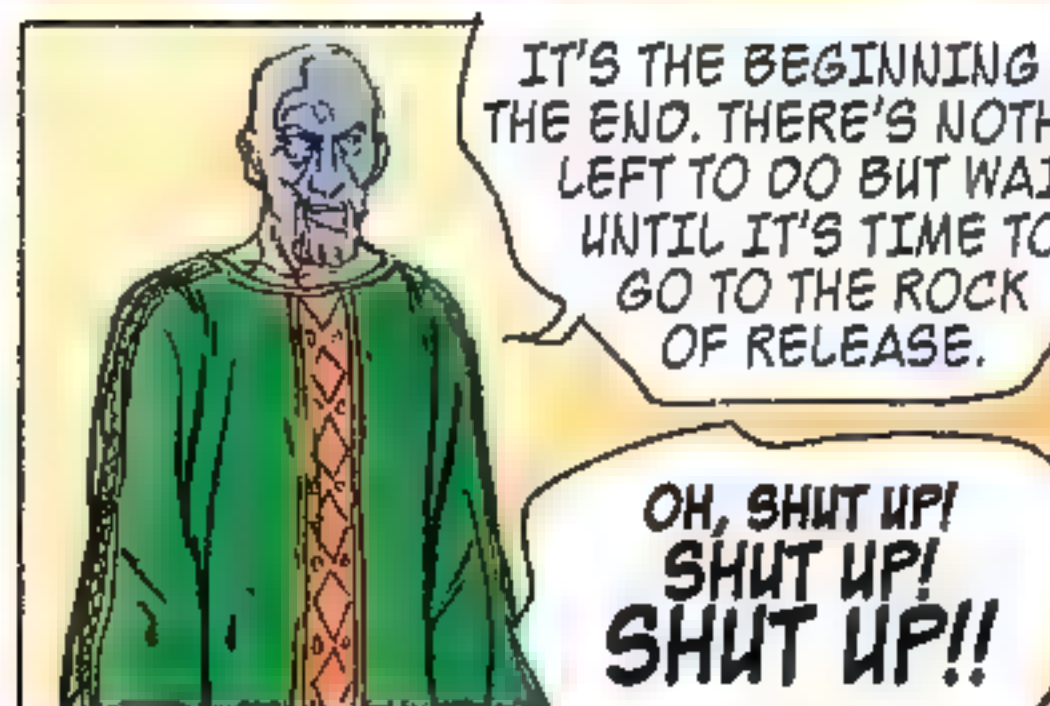


COUGH COUGH
COUGH!



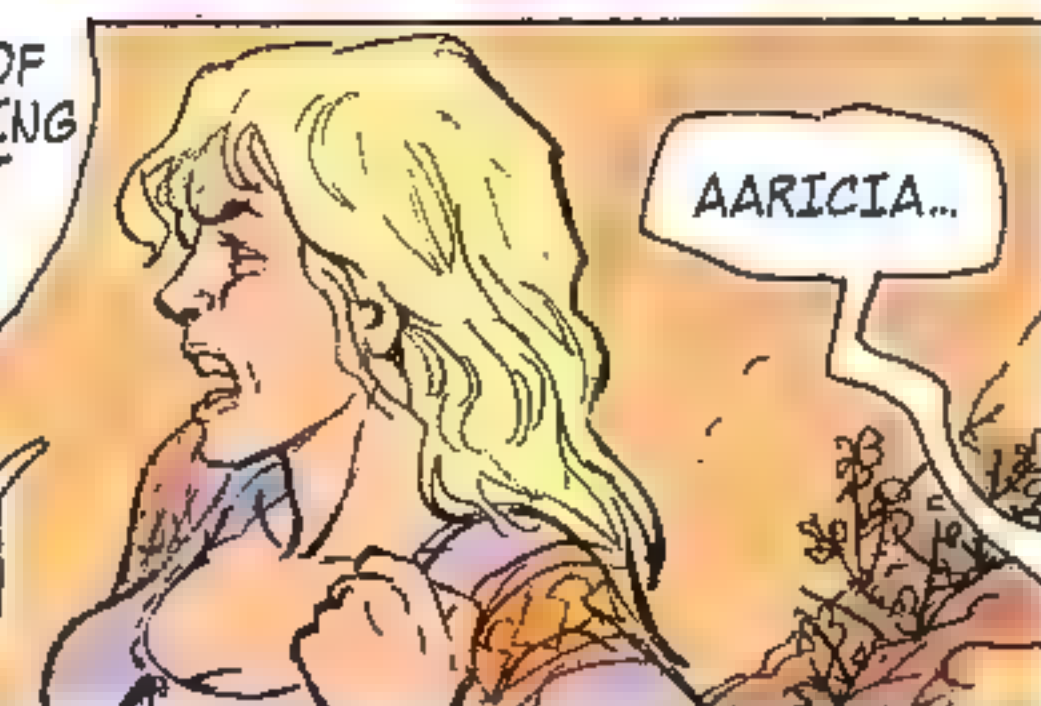
HIS BLOOD
HAS TURNED
BLUE. LIKE MINE.
LIKE YOURS
WILL SOON
TOO.

!!

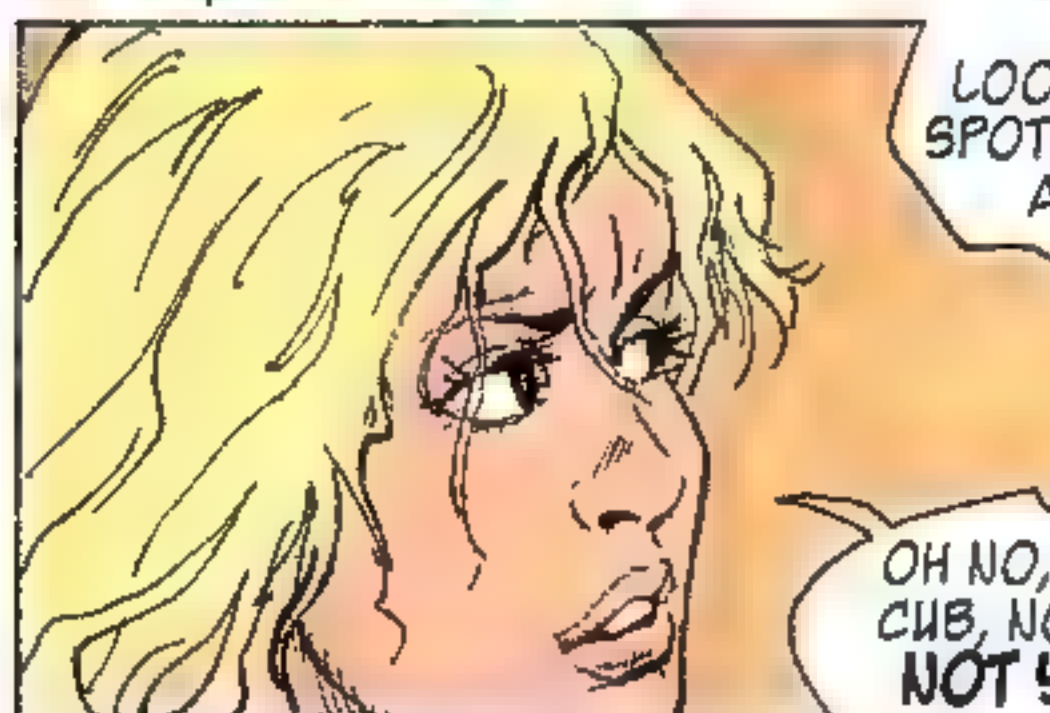


IT'S THE BEGINNING OF
THE END. THERE'S NOTHING
LEFT TO DO BUT WAIT
UNTIL IT'S TIME TO
GO TO THE ROCK
OF RELEASE.

OH, SHUT UP!
SHUT UP!
SHUT UP!!

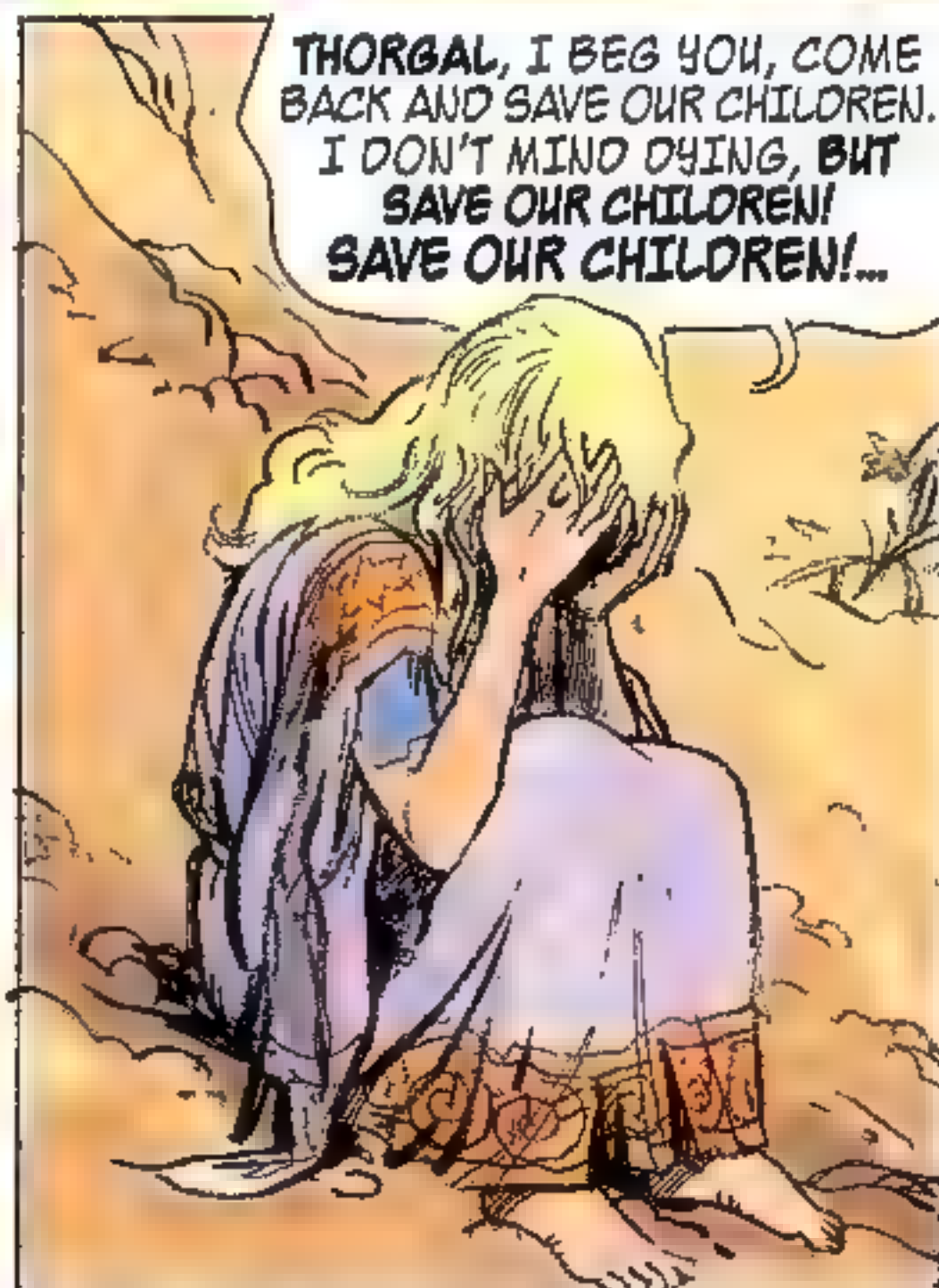
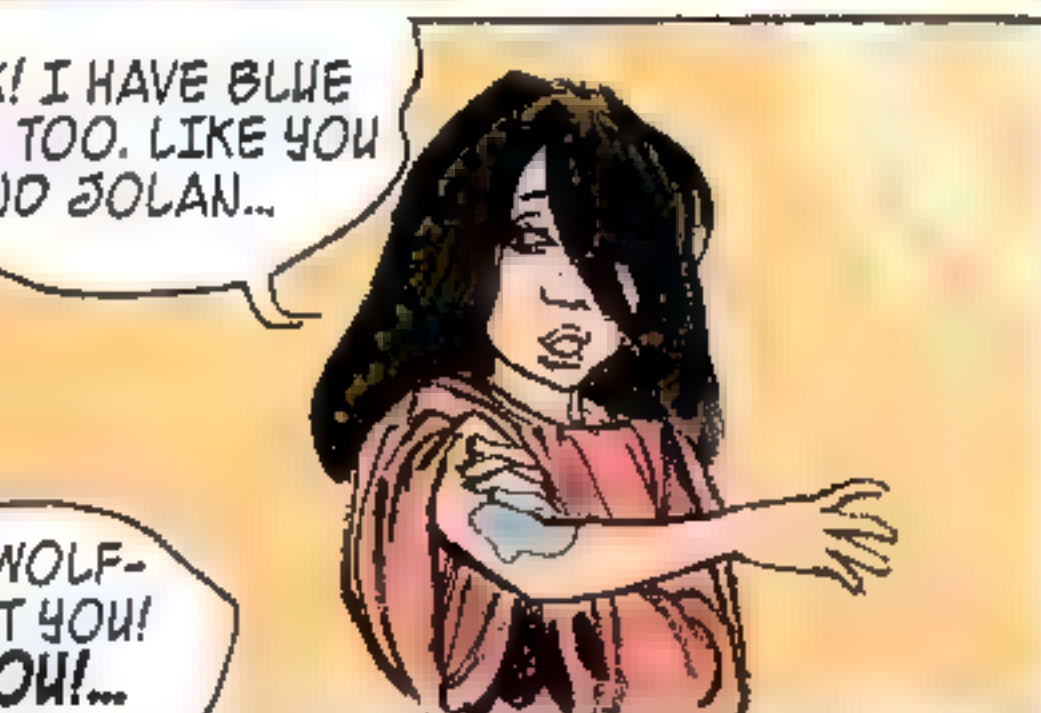


AARICIA...



LOOK! I HAVE BLUE
SPOTS TOO. LIKE YOU
AND JOLAN...

OH NO, WOLF-
CUB, NOT YOU!
NOT YOU!...



THORBAL, I BEG YOU, COME
BACK AND SAVE OUR CHILDREN.
I DON'T MIND DYING, BUT
SAVE OUR CHILDREN!
SAVE OUR CHILDREN!...

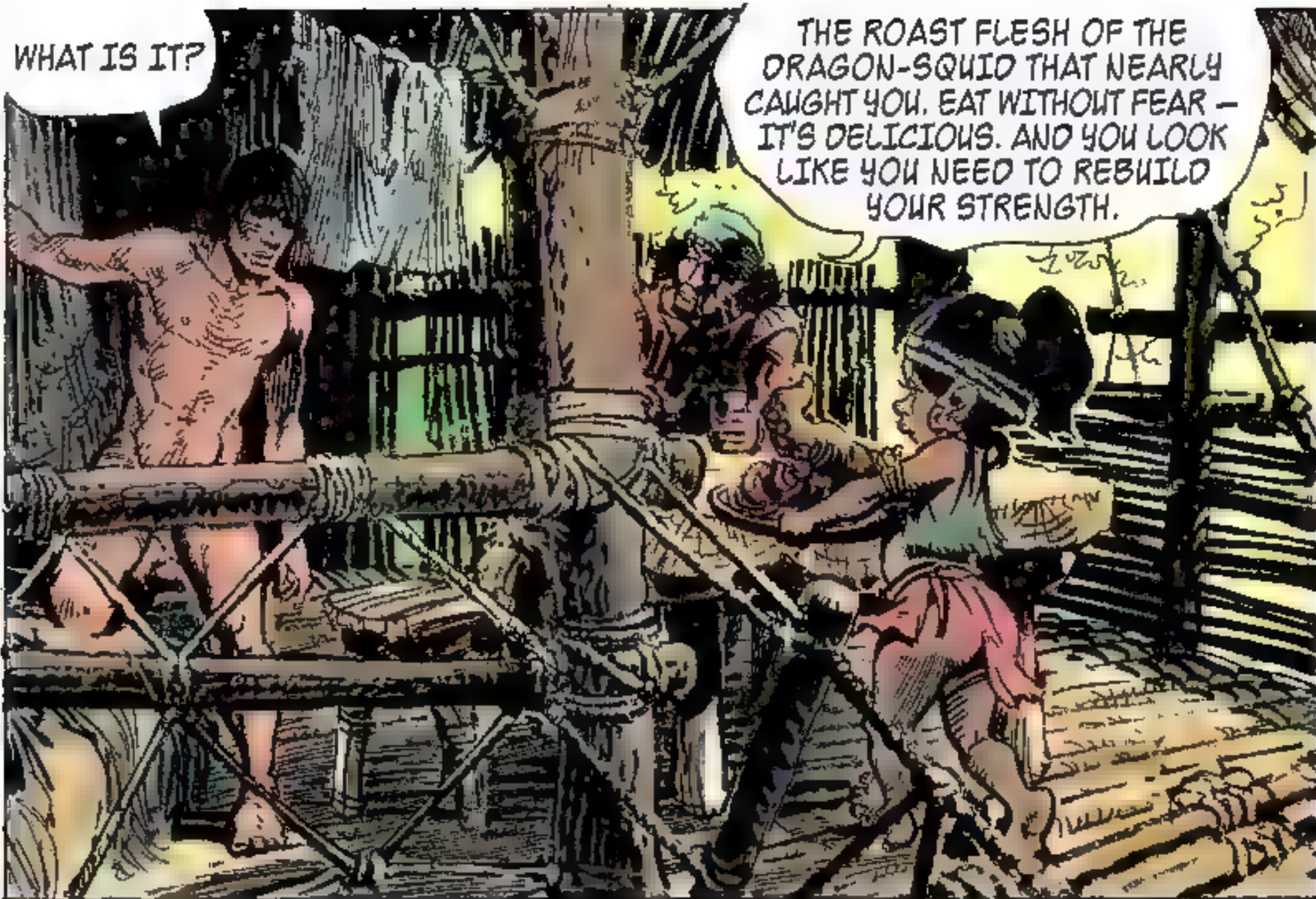


YOU WERE LUCKY TO HAVE
CROSSED PATHS WITH SOME OF
OUR DRAGON-SQUID HUNTERS,
TRAVELLER. OTHERWISE, THERE
WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF
YOU TO FILL A GOBLET.



WAIT... YOU...
YOU'RE...?

NO, I'M NOT THE ONE
YOU THINK. BUT I'LL
EXPLAIN LATER. HERE'S
SOMETHING TO
PICK YOU UP.



THIS IS SERIOUS. QUARL CLAIMS YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SHOT HIM IN THE SHOULDER A FEW DAYS AGO.



IT'S TRUE. BUT THEY ATTACKED US AS I WAS PEACEFULLY SAILING ALONG THE COAST WITH MY WIFE AND CHILDREN.



THEY MUST HAVE TAKEN YOU FOR MEMBERS OF ZARKAJ'S COURT.



QUARL REGRETS HIS MISTAKE, BUT HE WAS HUMILIATED BEFORE HIS MEN AND MUST AVENGE HIS HONOUR. SO HE'S CHALLENGING YOU TO A DUEL.



A DUEL?... WITH HIM!?

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE HIM. QUARL IS ONE OF OUR BEST FIGHTERS. IF YOU WIN, YOU WILL BE ALLOWED TO LIVE UNTIL THE BLUE PLAGUE TAKES YOU. IF YOU LOSE WITHOUT BEING KILLED OUTRIGHT, YOU WILL BE THROWN TO THE DRAGON-SQUIDS. SUCH IS OUR LAW.



DO I HAVE A CHOICE?

NO.

SO BE IT. BUT I'M AFRAID I HAVE OTHER THINGS ON MY MIND THAN FIGHTING A DUEL.



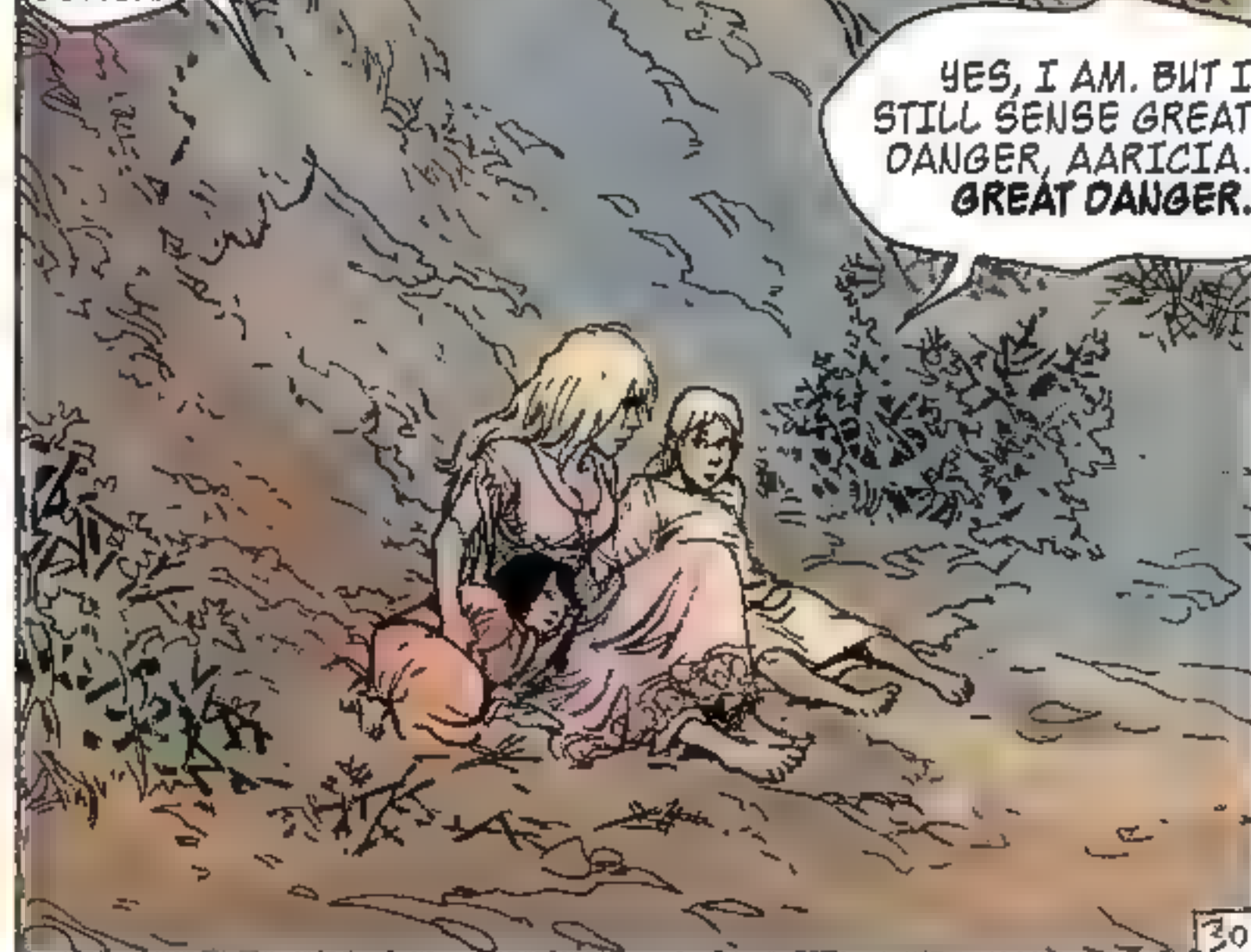
I KNOW. YOU ESCAPED FROM THE LABYRINTH TO TRY AND SAVE YOUR FAMILY FROM THE BLUE PLAGUE BY FINDING ARMENOS THE MAGE ON THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN.

H... HOW DO YOU KNOW?!



I KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS IN THE KINGDOM OF ZHAR AND IN THE PALACE OF PRINCE ZARKAJ. EAT NOW; YOUR MEAT IS GETTING COLD.

JOLAN, ARE YOU FEELING ANY BETTER?



YES, I AM. BUT I STILL SENSE GREAT DANGER, AARICIA. GREAT DANGER.



DID ARMENOS IMMUNISE YOU AGAINST THE BLUE PLAGUE?

YES. WE'RE HIS FRIENDS.

SO HE DOES EXIST. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TAKE ME TO HIM?

WHY WOULD I? TO HELP THOSE WHO REJECTED THE MYRMS AND ME?



FOR CENTURIES, THE PEOPLE OF ZHAR HAVE BELIEVED THAT DWARFS BRING BAD LUCK. SO ALL CHILDREN AFFLICTED WITH DWARFISM WERE RUTHLESSLY CAST OUT. THOSE WHO SURVIVED SOUGHT REFUGE HERE, IN THE SUNKEN FOREST, WHERE LITTLE BY LITTLE THEY CREATED A PRIMITIVE SOCIETY.

BY BECOMING CANNIBAL PIRATES?



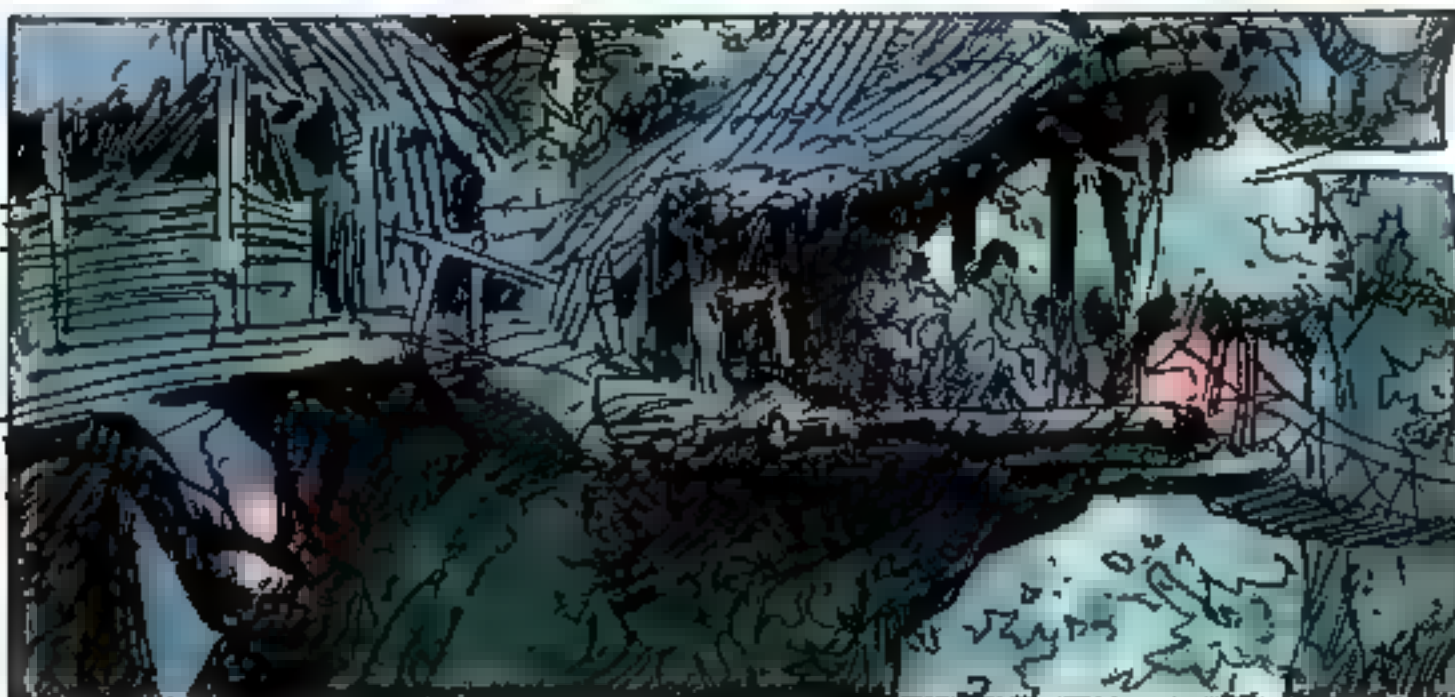
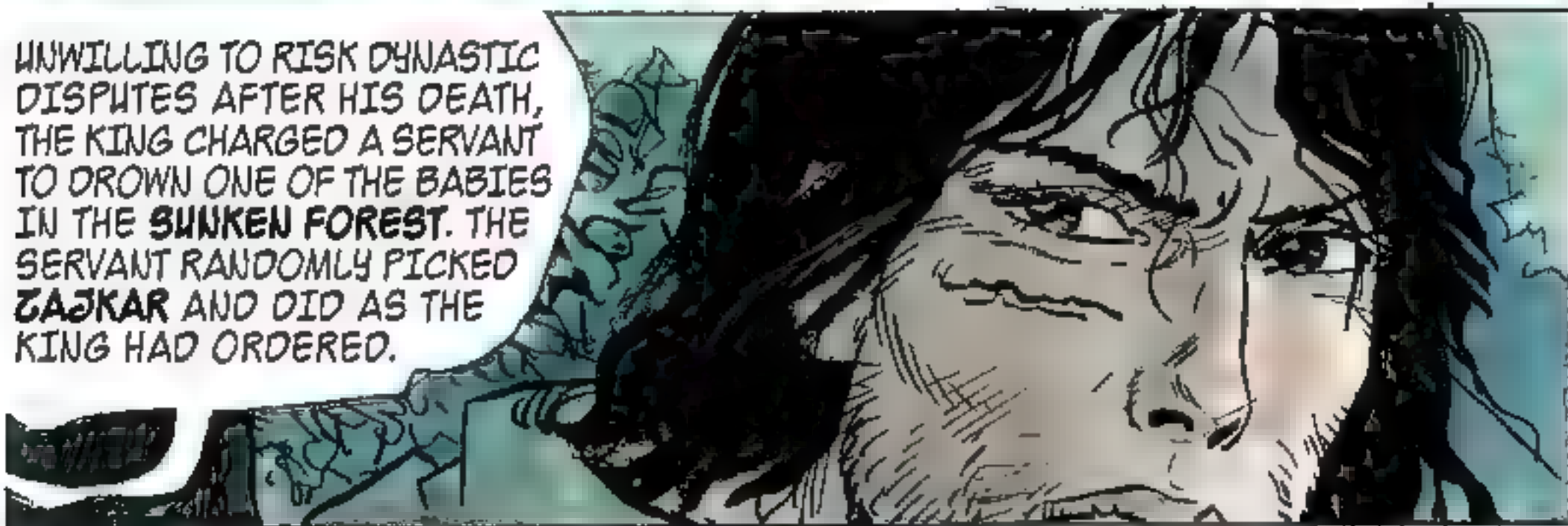
HAI HAI HAI! THE STUPIDITY OF PEOPLE IS LIMITLESS WHEN THEY FEAR THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT. NO, THE MYRMS DON'T EAT HUMAN FLESH. BUT THEY DO KNOW HOW TO FIGHT THESE DAYS. I TAUGHT THEM.

YOU? HOW DID YOU COME TO BE HERE?

OH, IT'S THE SAME OLD STORY. ABOUT 30 YEARS AGO, THE KING OF ZHAR'S WIFE FINALLY PROVIDED HIM WITH THE HEIR HE'D AWAITED FOR SO LONG. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT HEIR WAS DOUBLE, AS THE QUEEN GAVE BIRTH TO TWINS: ZARKAJ AND ZAJKAR.



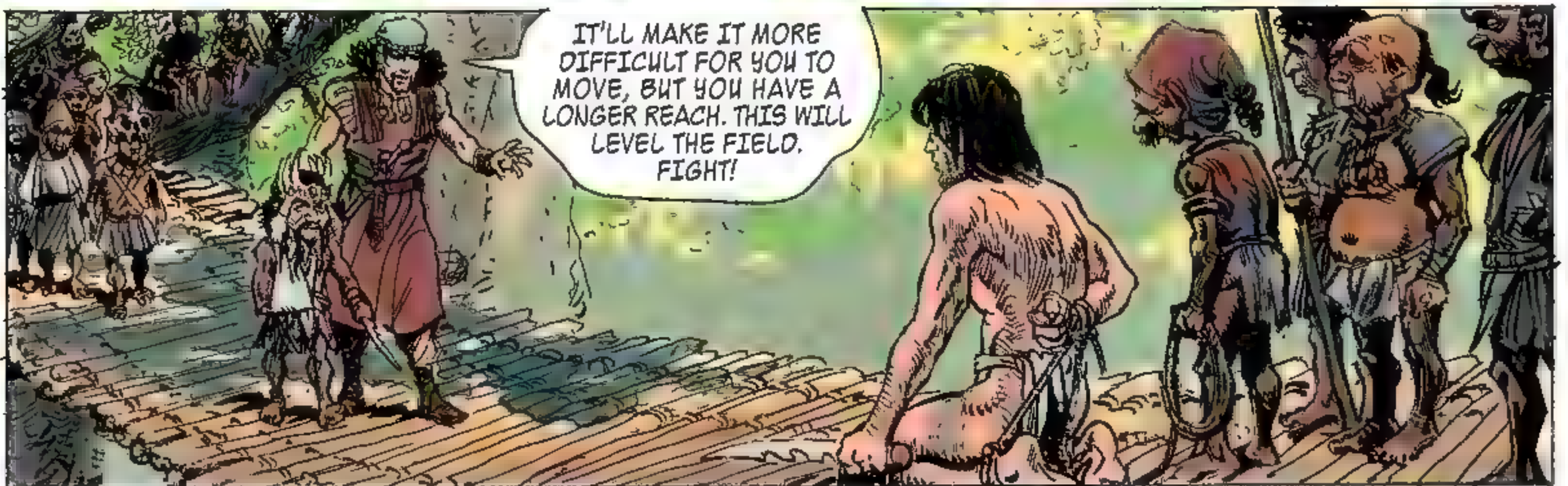
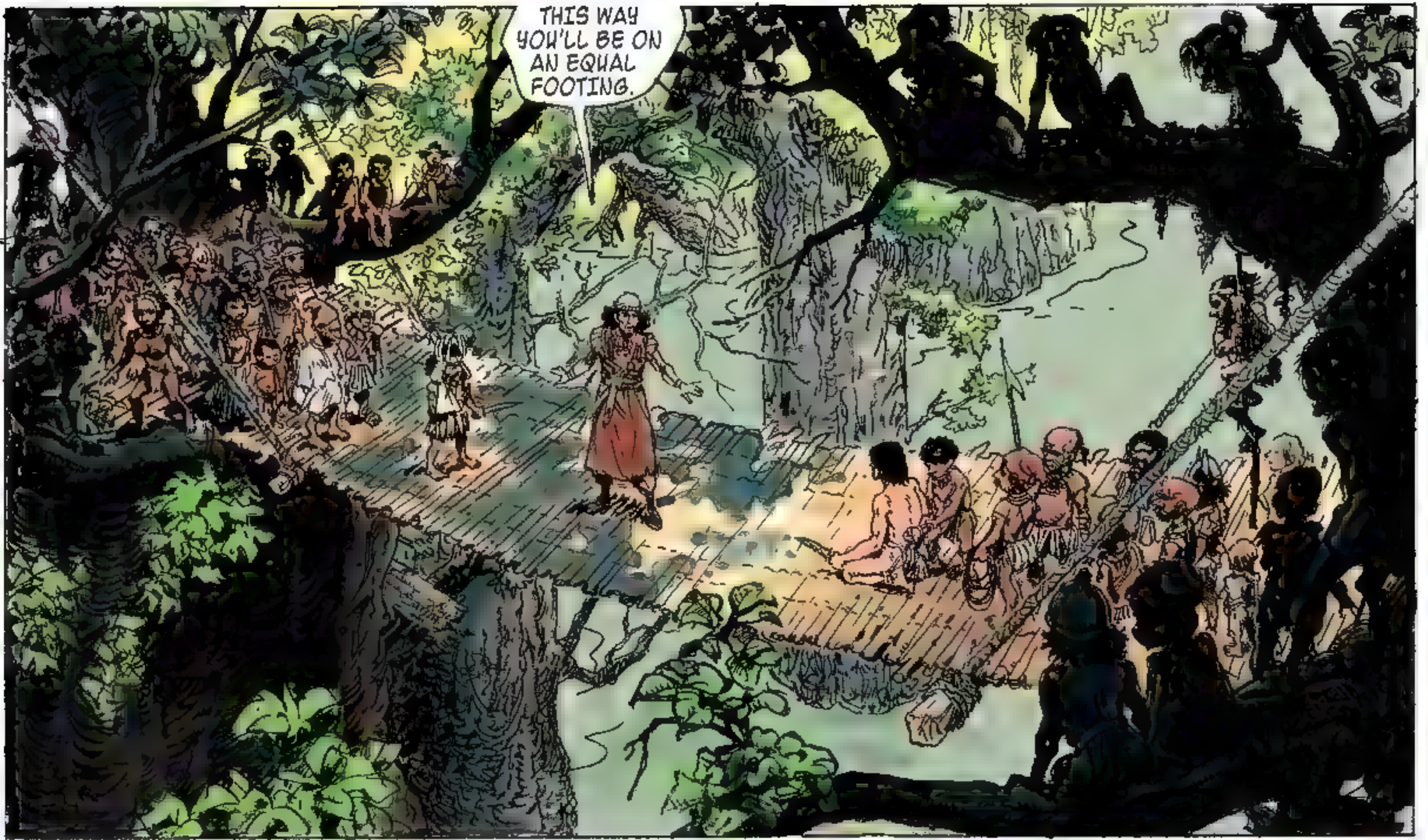
UNWILLING TO RISK DYNASTIC DISPUTES AFTER HIS DEATH, THE KING CHARGED A SERVANT TO DROWN ONE OF THE BABIES IN THE SUNKEN FOREST. THE SERVANT RANDOMLY PICKED ZAJKAR AND DID AS THE KING HAD ORDERED.

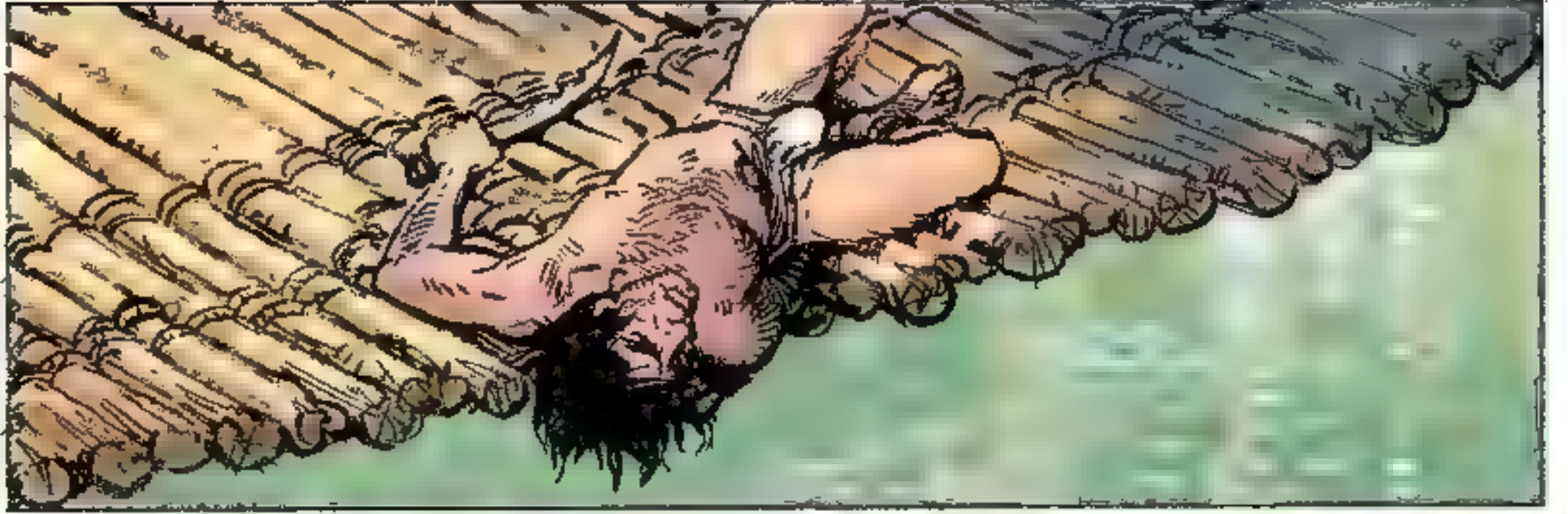


YET SOMEHOW THE CHILD SURVIVED AND WAS TAKEN IN BY THE MYRMS, WHO FED AND BROUGHT HIM UP LIKE ONE OF THEIR OWN. IN EXCHANGE, AFTER BECOMING AN ADULT, I TAUGHT THEM HOW TO CRAFT WEAPONS, SO THAT THESE OUTCASTS WOULD TURN INTO A FEARED AND RESPECTED COMMUNITY.

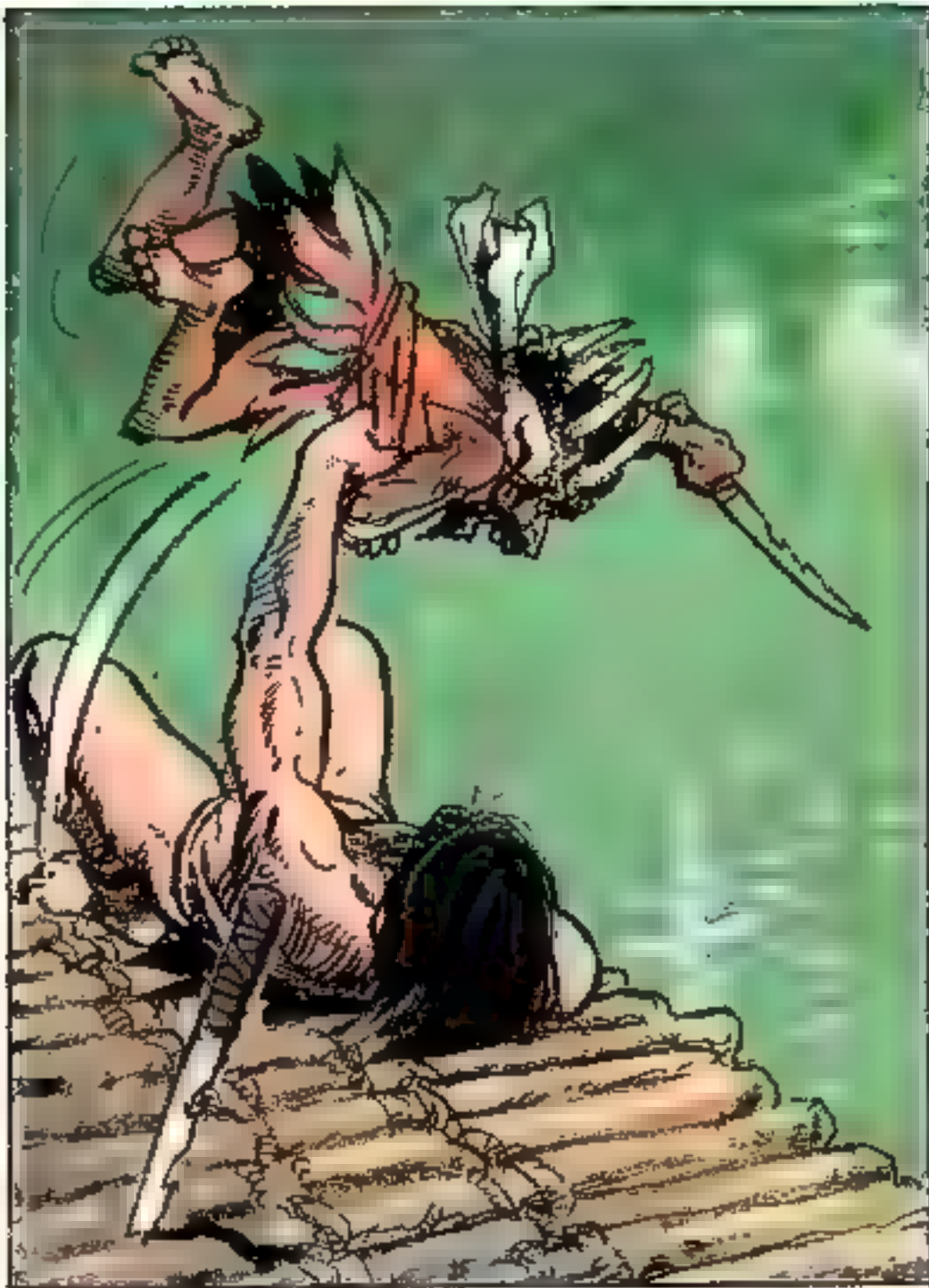
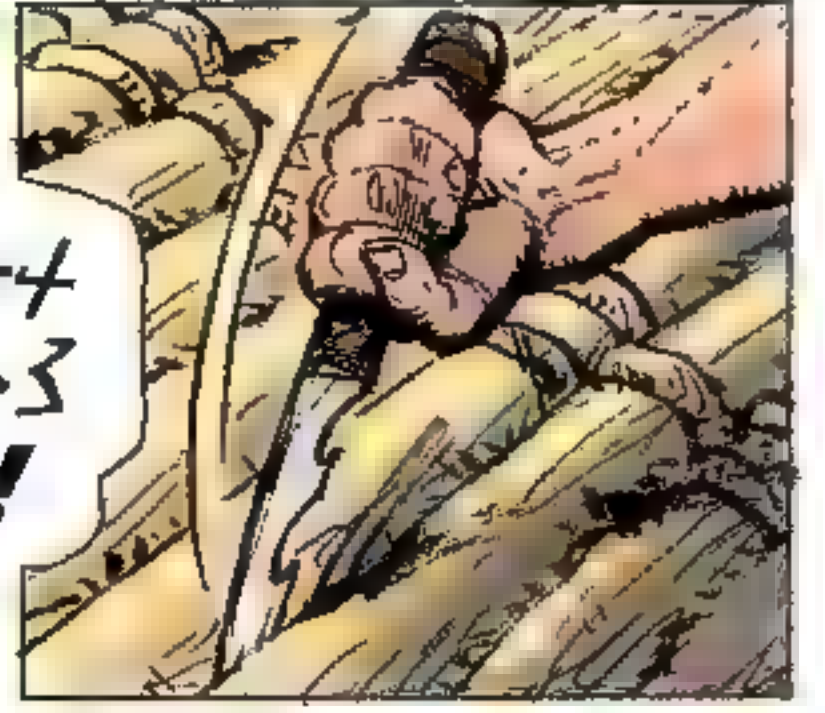


LET'S GO AND GET SOME SLEEP NOW. YOU'LL NEED ALL YOUR STRENGTH TOMORROW MORNING.



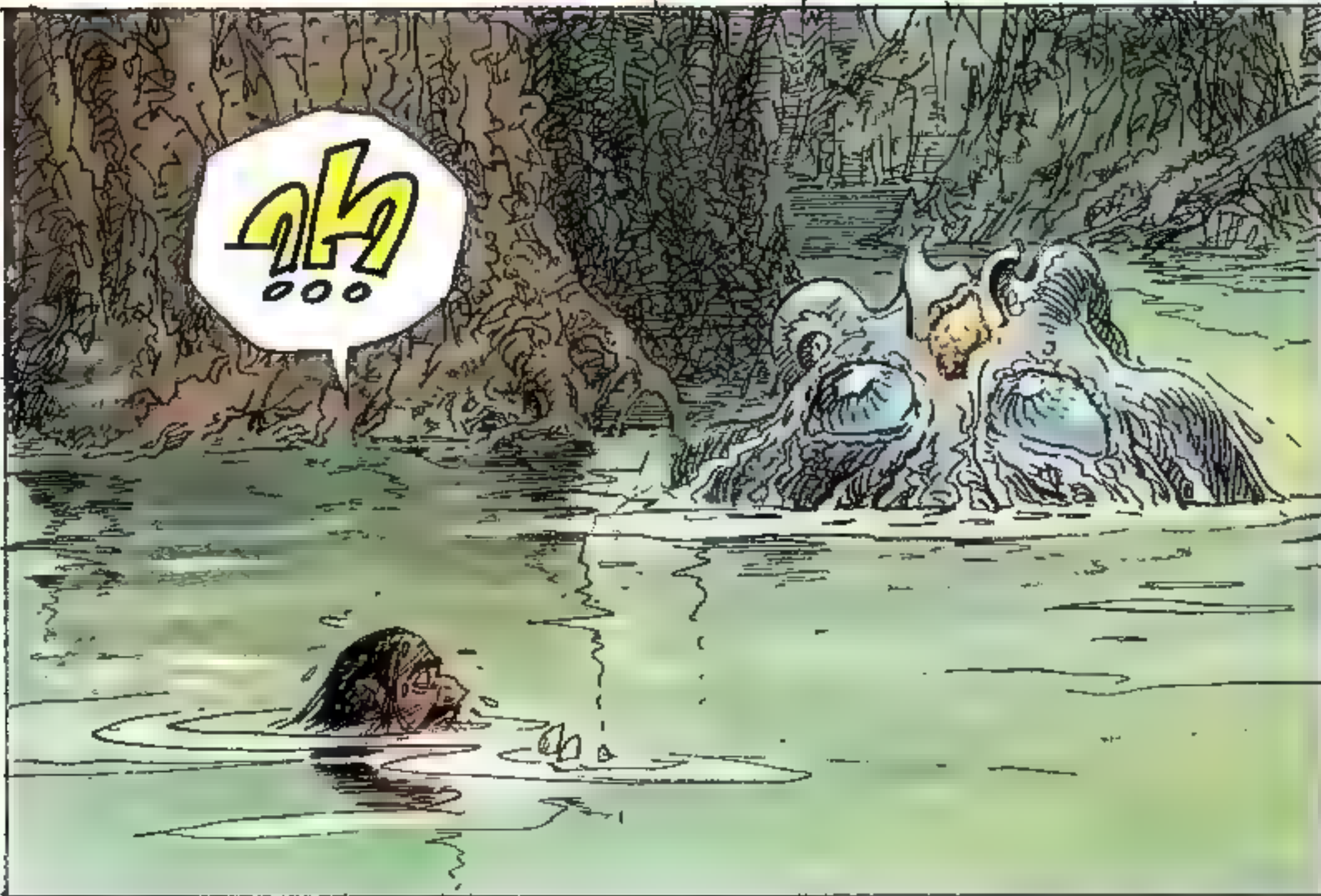


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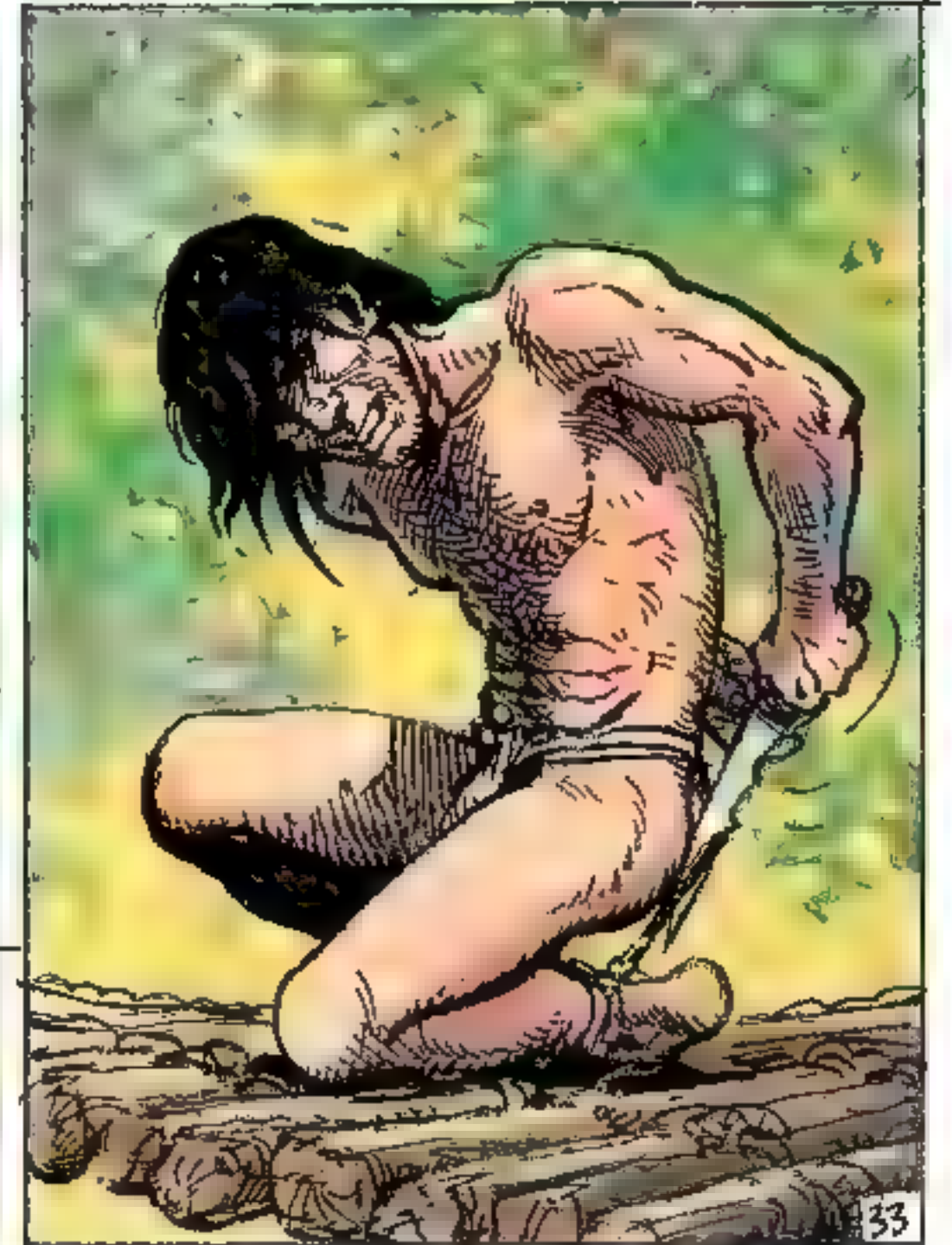


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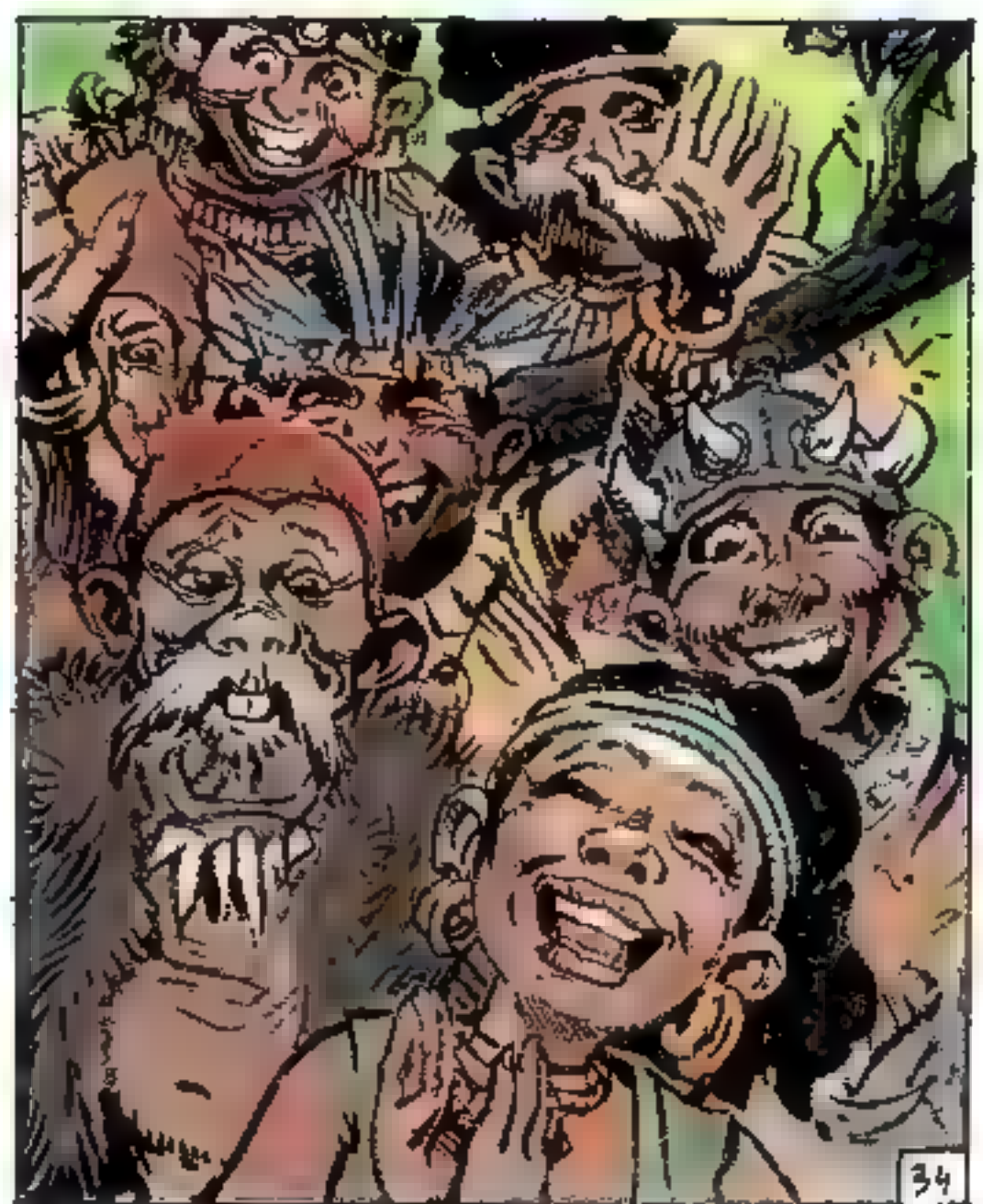
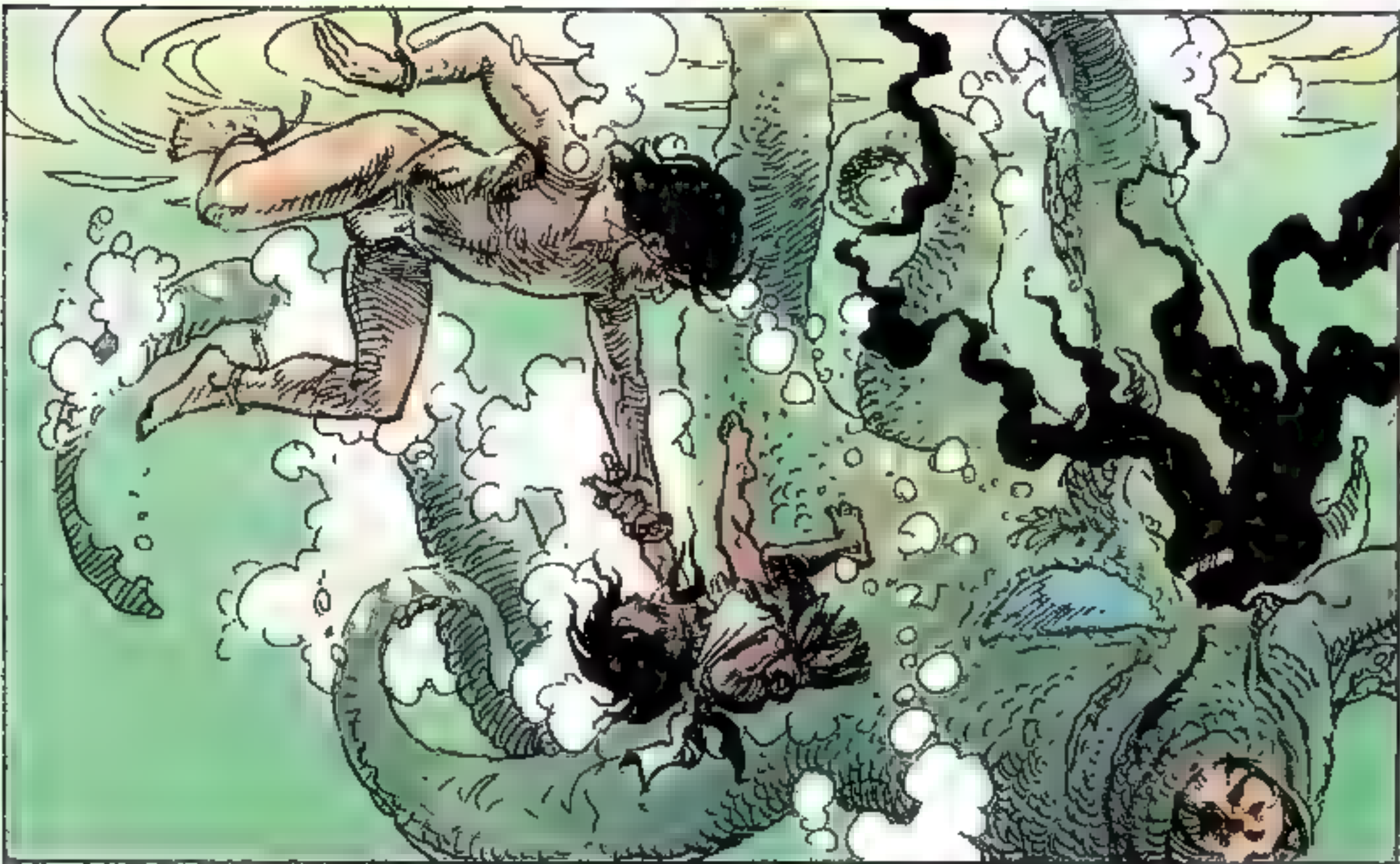
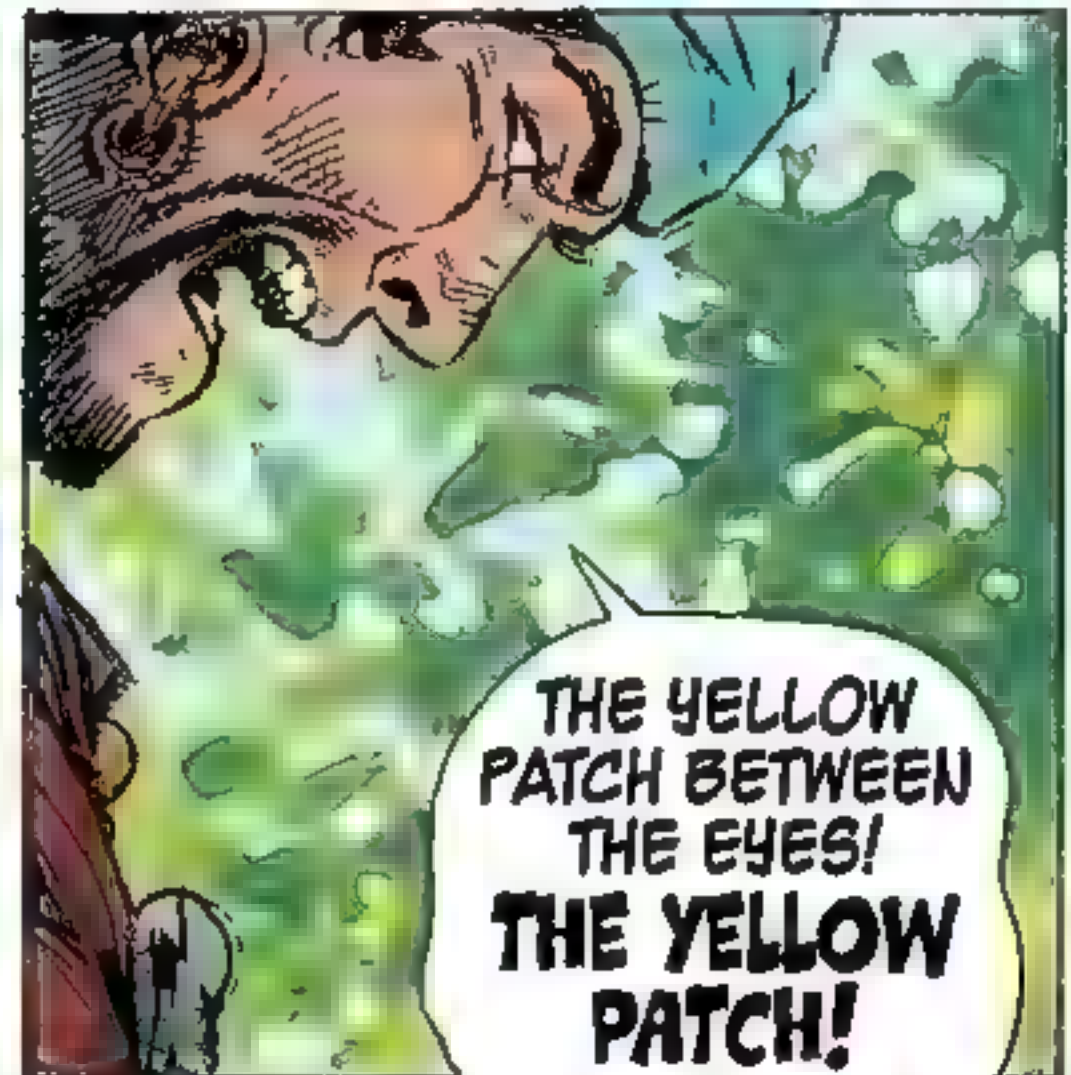
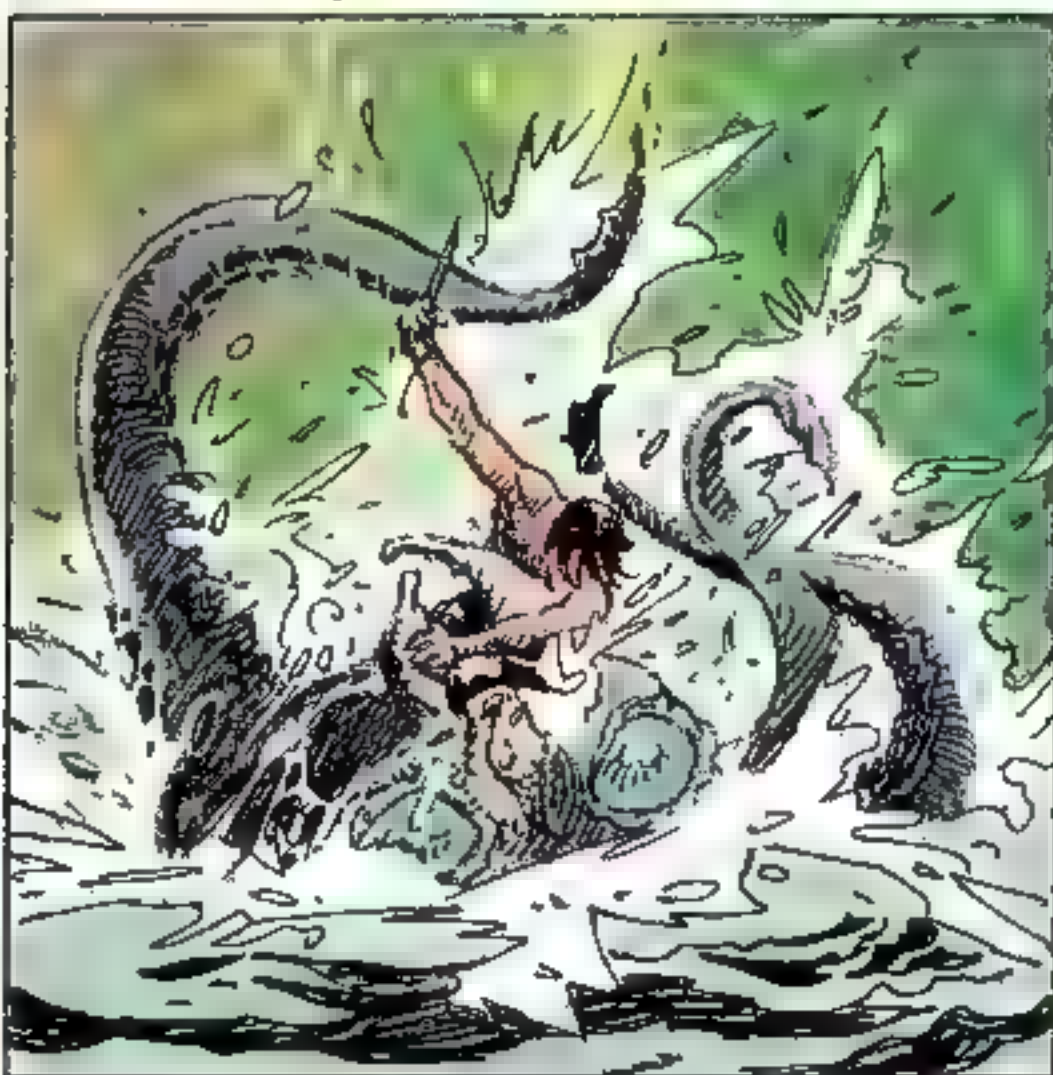
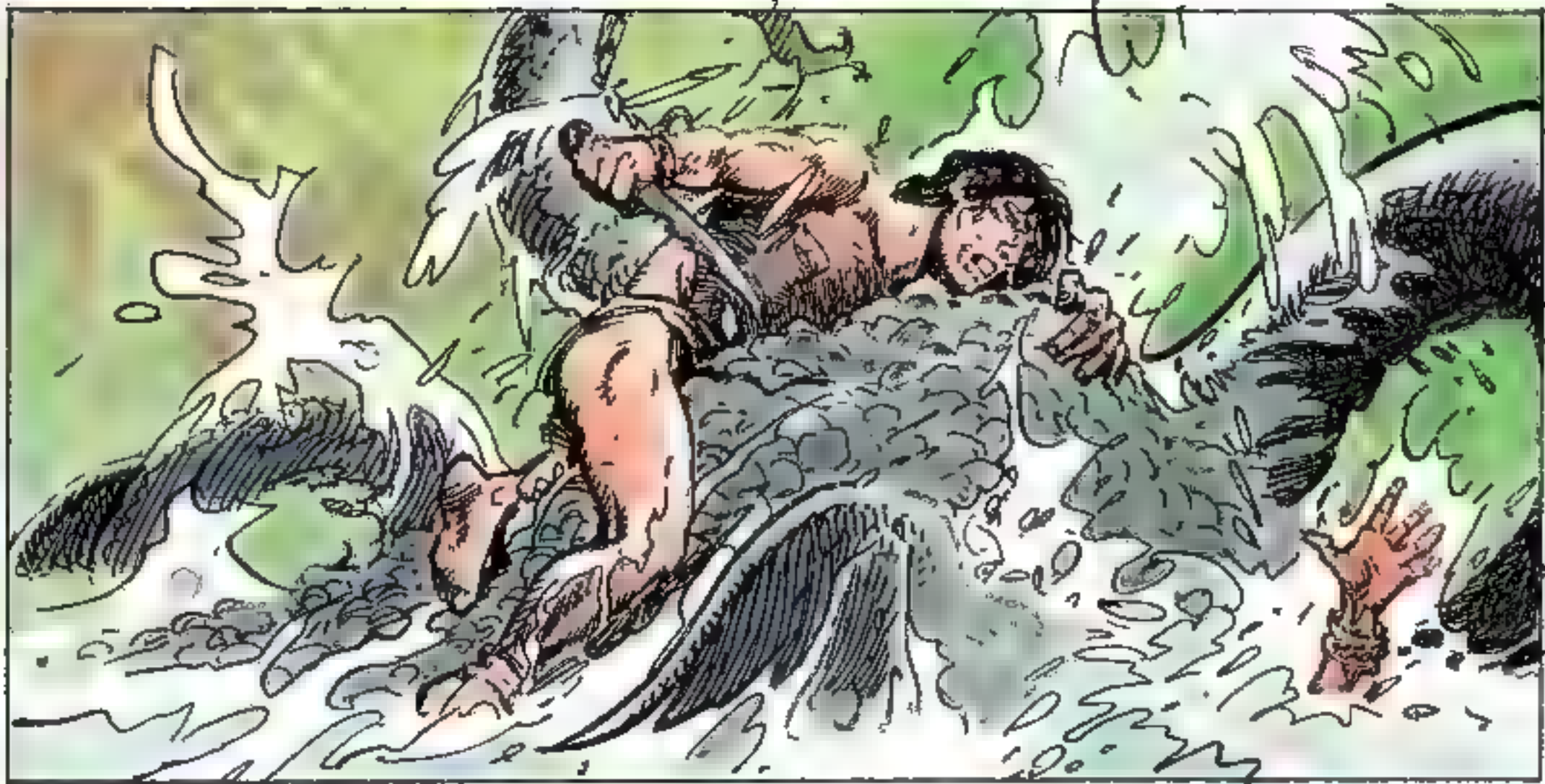
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34



33



MANDORI! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHERE...?

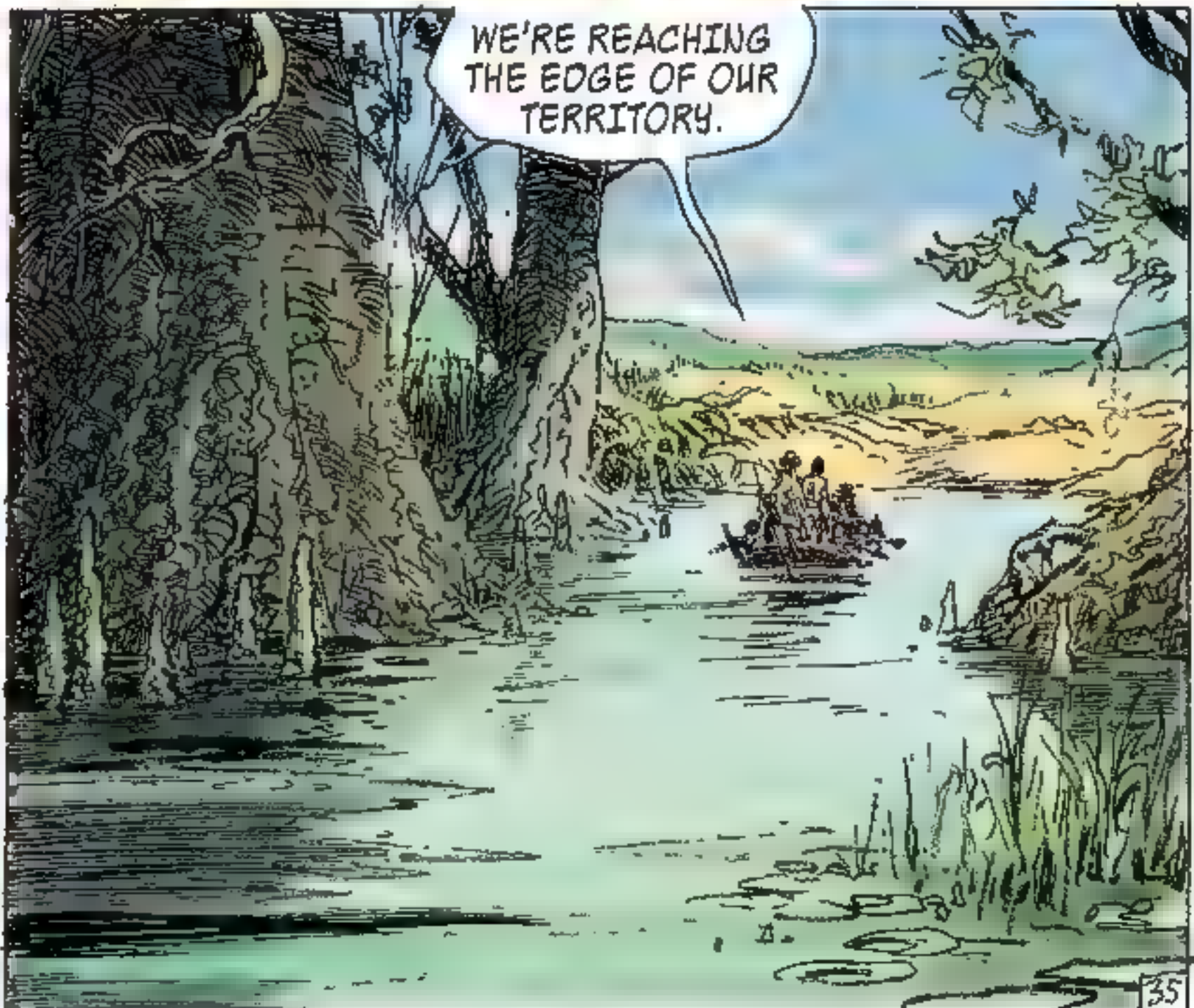
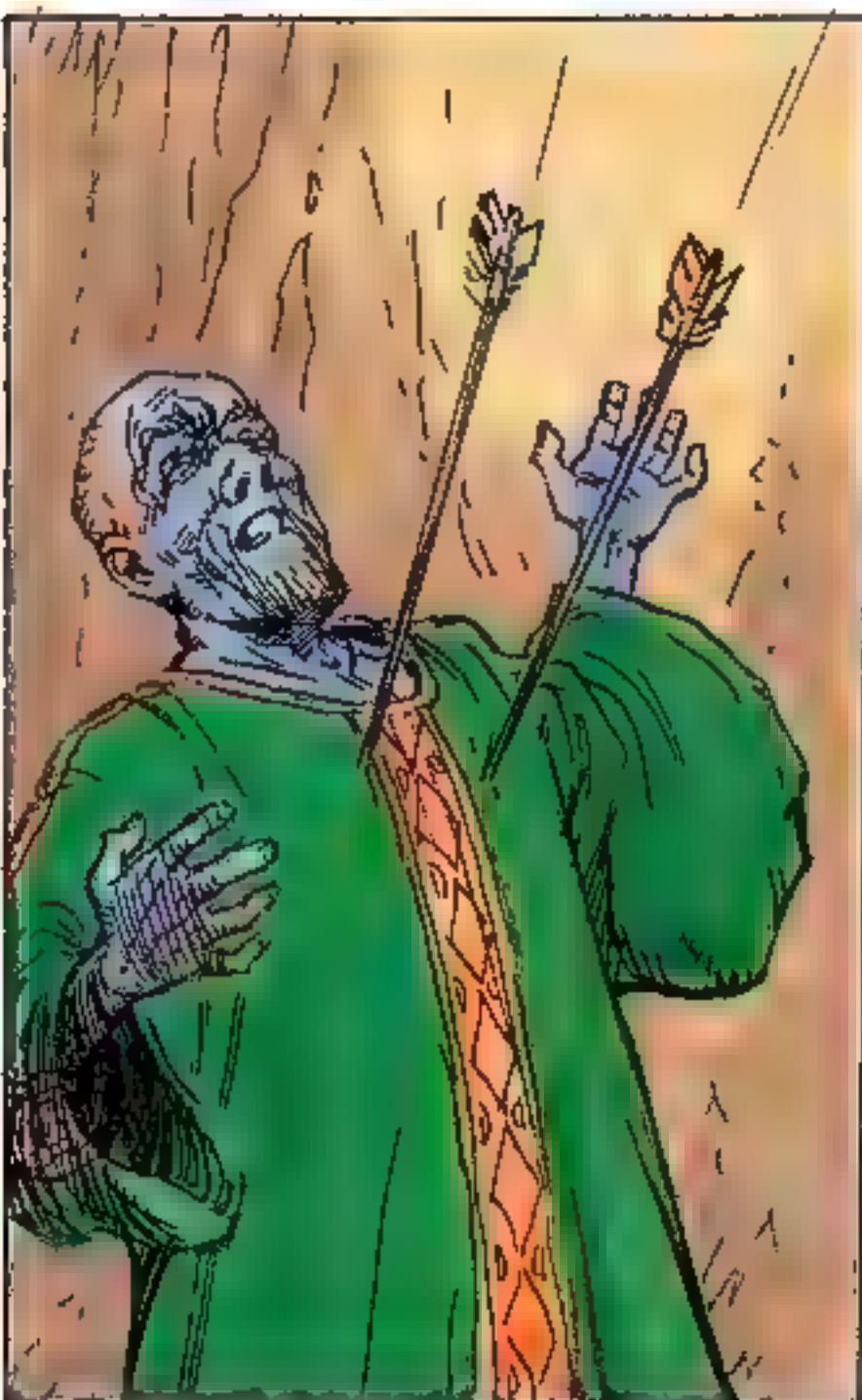
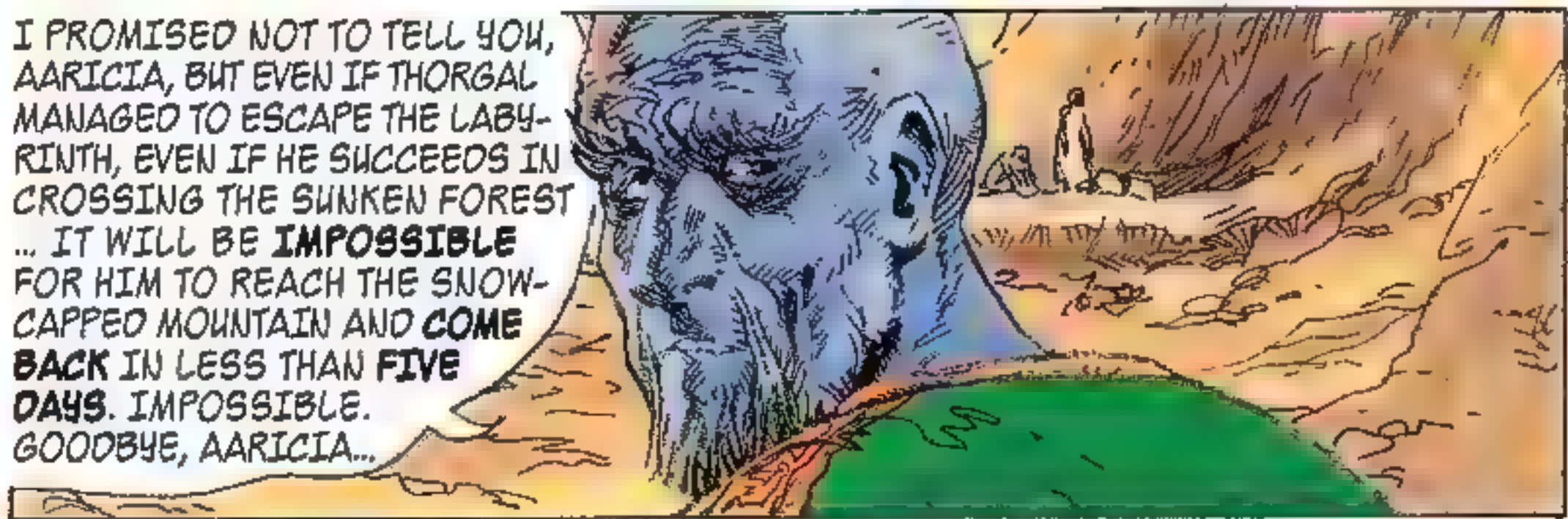


THE PAIN IS GETTING TOO MUCH, AARICIA. IT IS TIME FOR ME TO GO TO THE ROCK OF RELEASE.

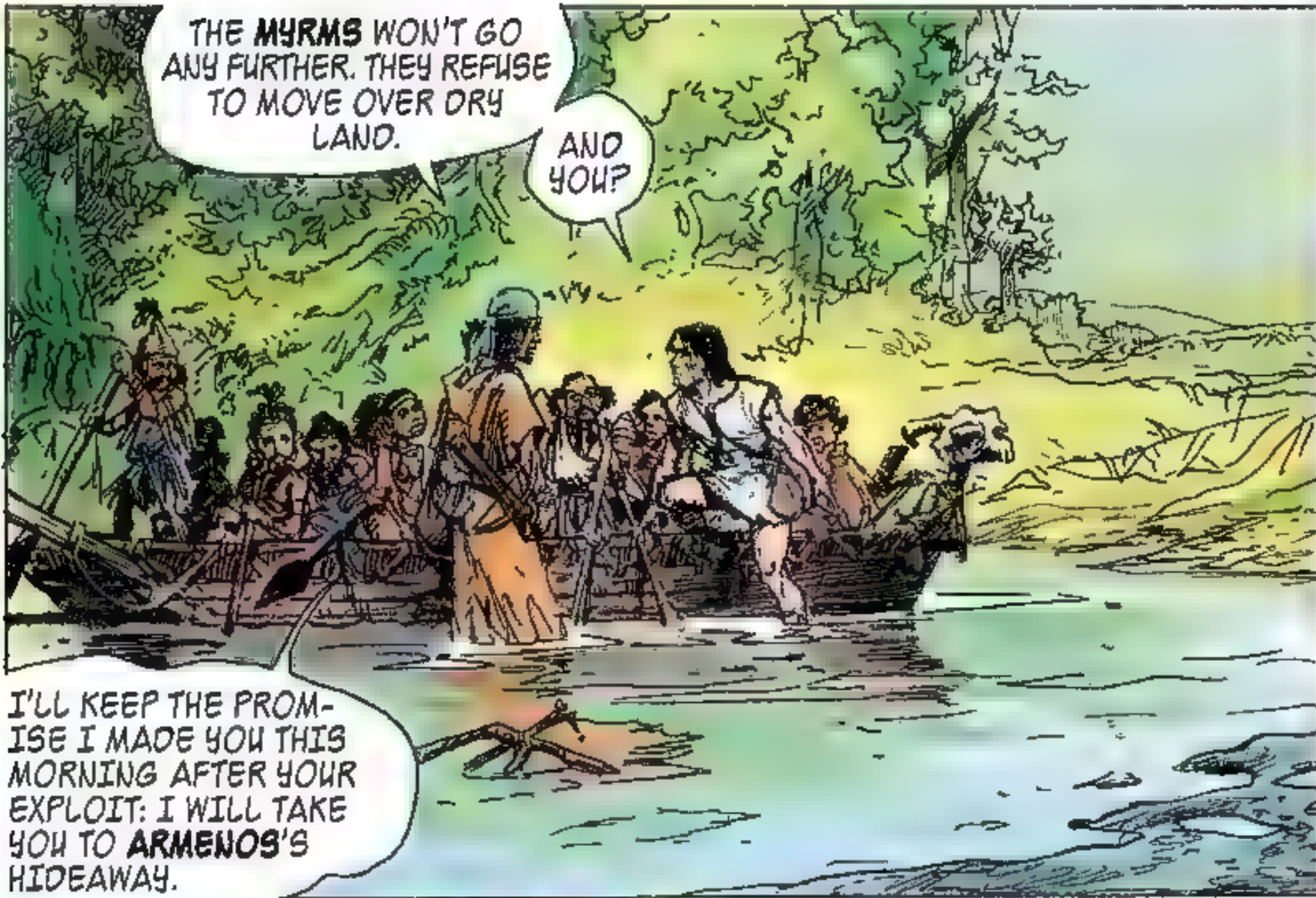


THORGAL SAID FIVE DAYS, MANDOR. HE'S ONLY BEEN GONE FOR TWO. WAIT A LITTLE LONGER, PLEASE!

I PROMISED NOT TO TELL YOU, AARICIA, BUT EVEN IF THORGAL MANAGED TO ESCAPE THE LABYRINTH, EVEN IF HE SUCCEEDS IN CROSSING THE SUNKEN FOREST ... IT WILL BE **IMPOSSIBLE** FOR HIM TO REACH THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN AND COME **BACK** IN LESS THAN **FIVE DAYS**. IMPOSSIBLE. GOODBYE, AARICIA...



WE'RE REACHING THE EDGE OF OUR TERRITORY.



THE MYRMS WON'T GO ANY FURTHER. THEY REFUSE TO MOVE OVER DRY LAND.

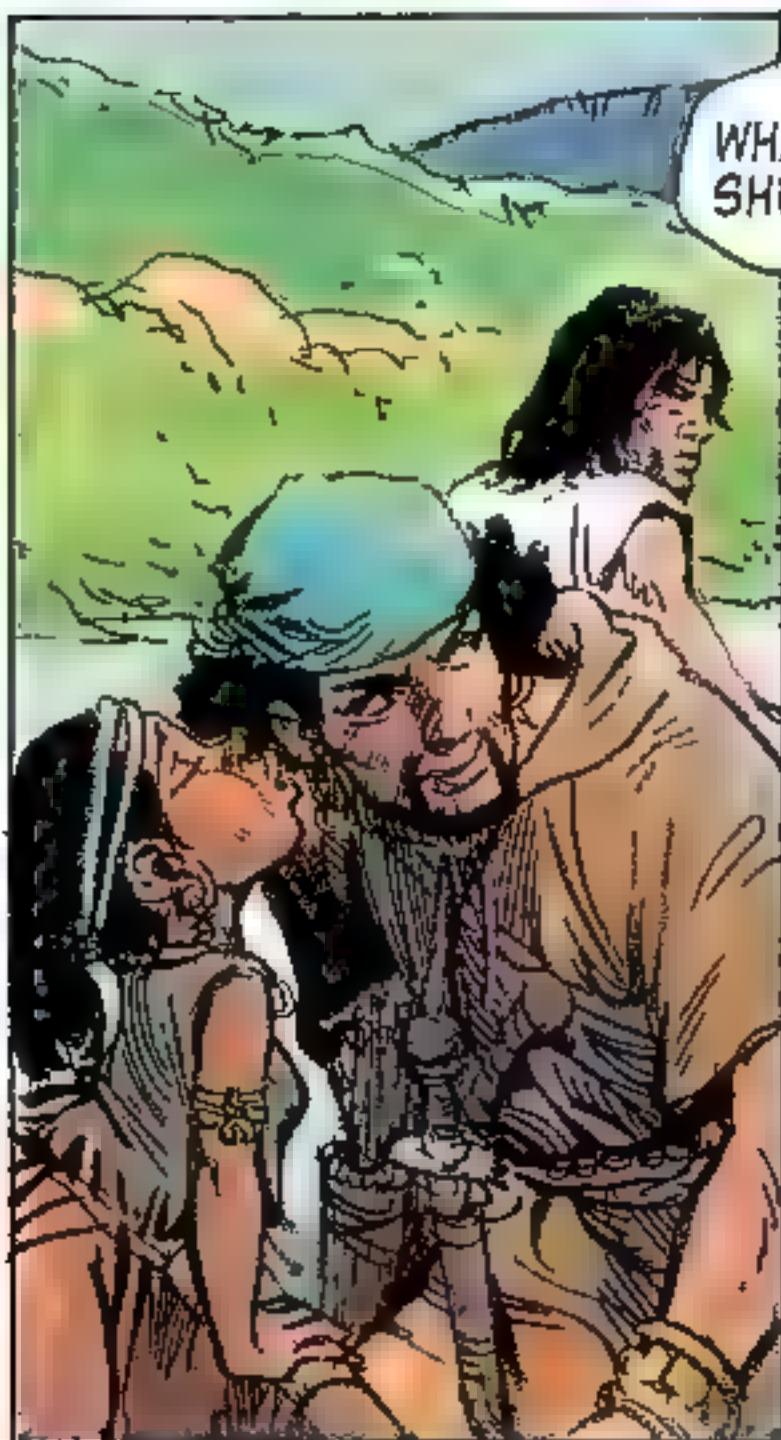
AND YOU?

I'LL KEEP THE PROMISE I MADE YOU THIS MORNING AFTER YOUR EXPLOIT: I WILL TAKE YOU TO ARMENOS'S HIDEAWAY.



GOODBYE, QUARL. YOU WERE A VALIANT OPPONENT, AND I THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

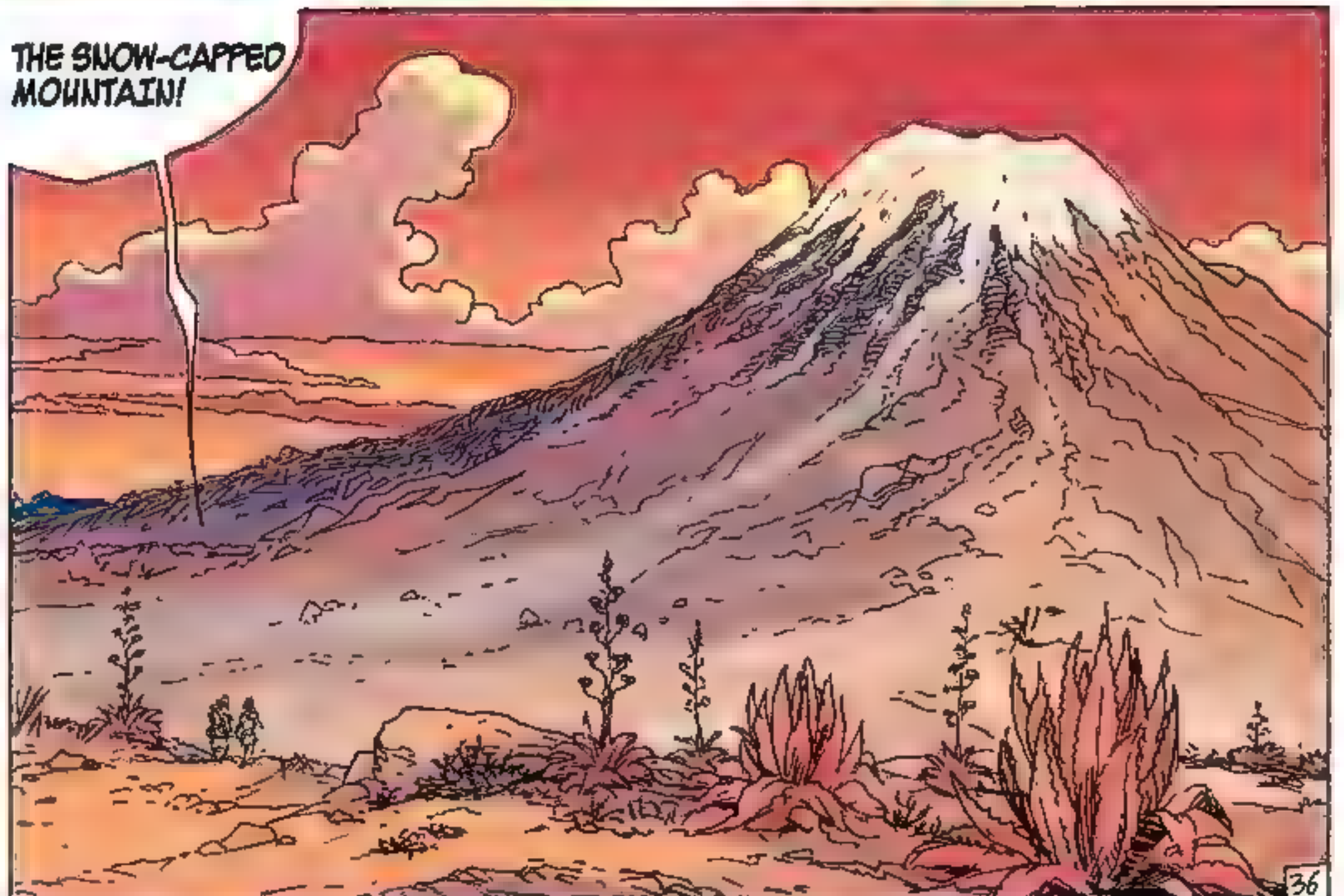
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WHAT DID SHE SAY?



THAT SHE HOPES YOU WILL BE CURED OF THE BLUE PLAGUE, AND THAT IT'S A PITY YOU'RE ALREADY MARRIED.



THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN!

36

IT WILL TAKE
HALF A DAY TO
REACH IT. AND
ANOTHER HALF-
DAY TO CLIMB
TO ARMENOS'S
HOME.

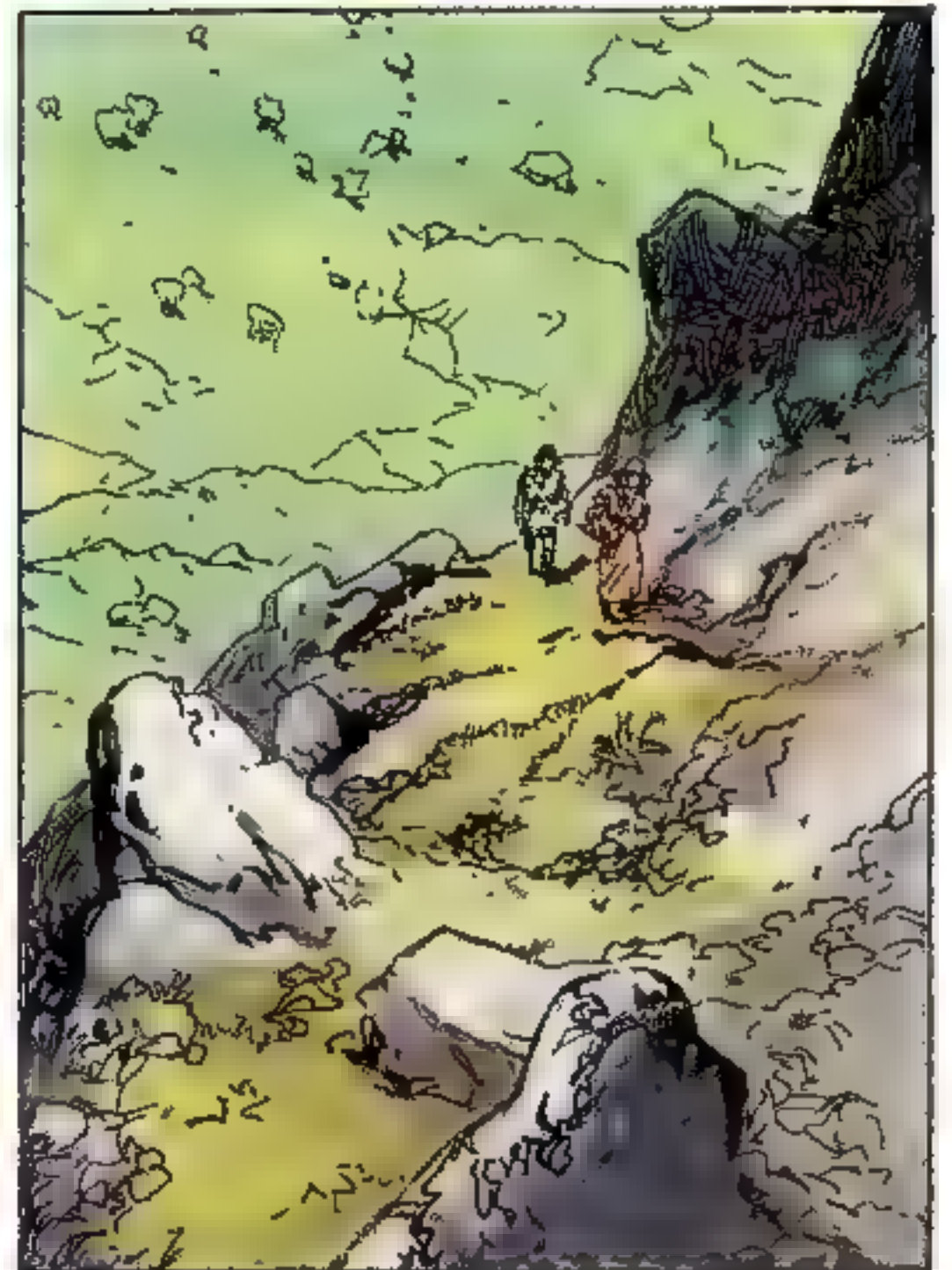
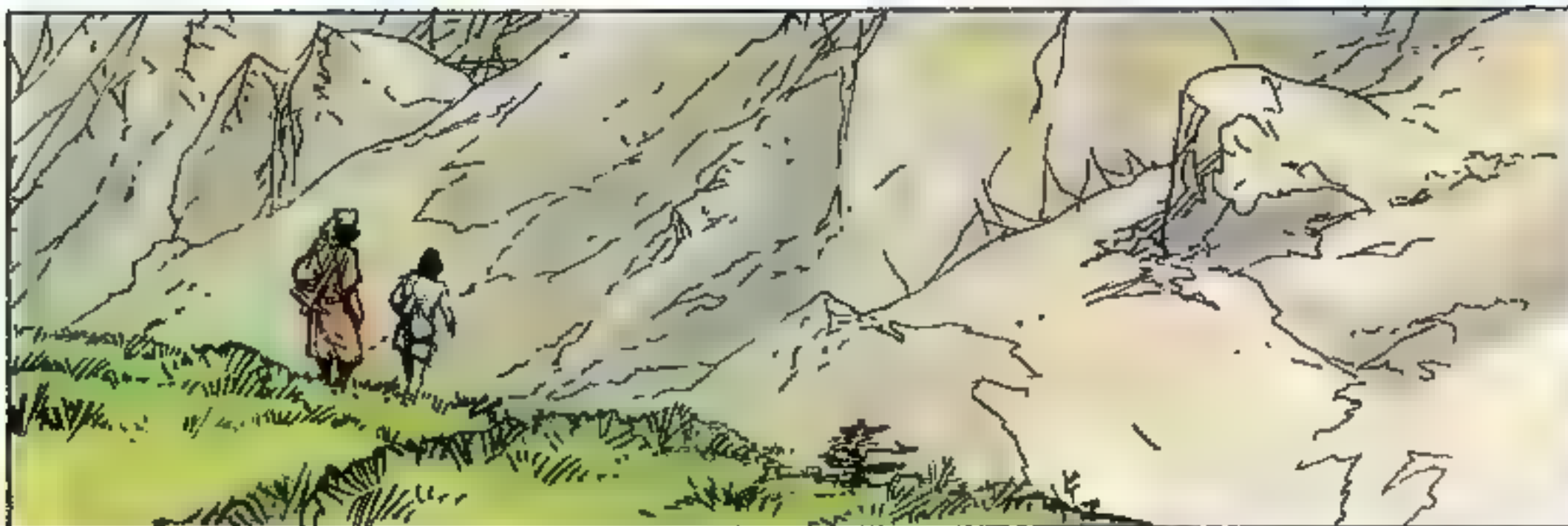
THAT LONG?... BUT...
IT'S ALREADY BEEN THREE
DAYS SINCE I LEFT THE
LABYRINTH.

MY SON HAS ONLY TWO DAYS
TO LIVE; MY WIFE ONLY A LITTLE
MORE. I'LL NEVER MAKE IT
BACK IN TIME.

IT CANNOT BE HELPED.
YOU, AT LEAST, WILL
LIVE, SHOULD ARMENOS
AGREE TO HEAL YOU.

AARICIA...
IT HURTS...

BE STRONG, SWEET-
HEART. JUST TWO MORE
DAYS AND THORGAL WILL
BE BACK. HE PROMISED.





ARMENOS?

NO, THIS IS HIS SERVANT KADIR. HELP ME TAKE HIM INSIDE.



HE'S REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS. THE POOR FELLOW'S HAD NOTHING TO EAT OR DRINK FOR TWO DAYS, SINCE SOME BLACK-CLAD MEN CAME TO TAKE ARMENOS AWAY BY FORCE.

PRINCE ZARKAJ'S MEN!?

MOST LIKELY. IT'S POSSIBLE TO RIDE AROUND THE SUNKEN FOREST IF YOU HAVE GOOD HORSES. BUT WHY KIDNAP ARMENOS? TO HEAL THE POOR SOULS SUFFERING FROM THE BLUE PLAGUE? MY DEAR BROTHER CARES LITTLE ABOUT HIS PEOPLE'S HARDSHIPS, AS LONG AS THEY'RE NOT HIS HARDSHIPS TOO.



THAT'S IT...



I DON'T KNOW. IT DOESN'T MATTER; ALL IS LOST. I'D NEED AT LEAST **THREE** DAYS TO REACH THE PALACE, BUT I ONLY HAVE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LEFT.



THERE'S YOUR REASON. **ZARKAJ** IS AFRAID MY WIFE AND SON MAY HAVE CONTAMINATED HIM. HE REMEMBERED THE LEGEND OF **ARMENOS**, THOUGHT HE HAD NOTHING TO LOSE AND SENT HIS SOLDIERS TO CHECK ITS VERACITY.



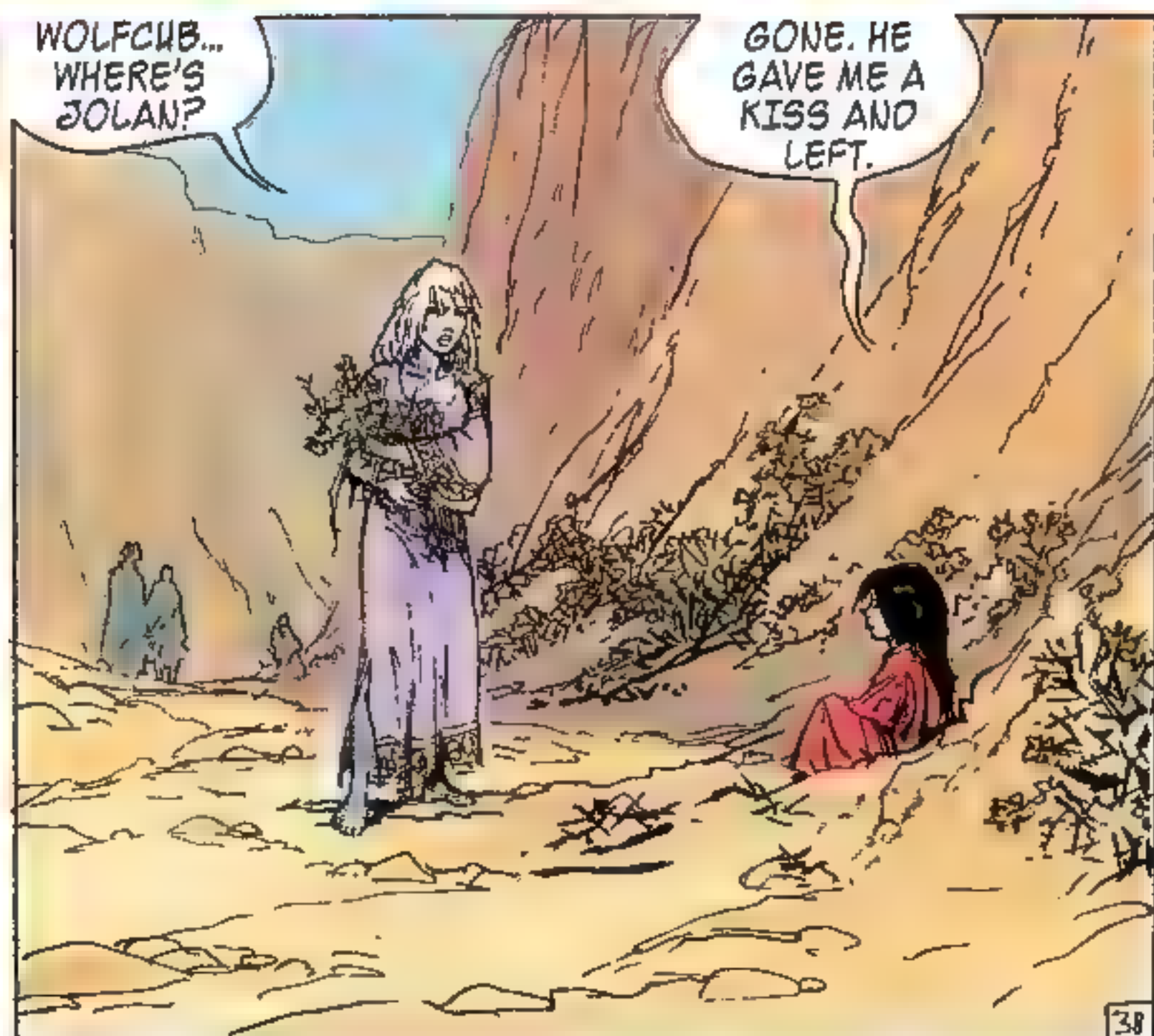
SO ARMENOS MUST BE IN **ZARKAJ'S** PALACE. WHAT WILL YOU DO?

WAIT... THERE MAY BE A WAY...



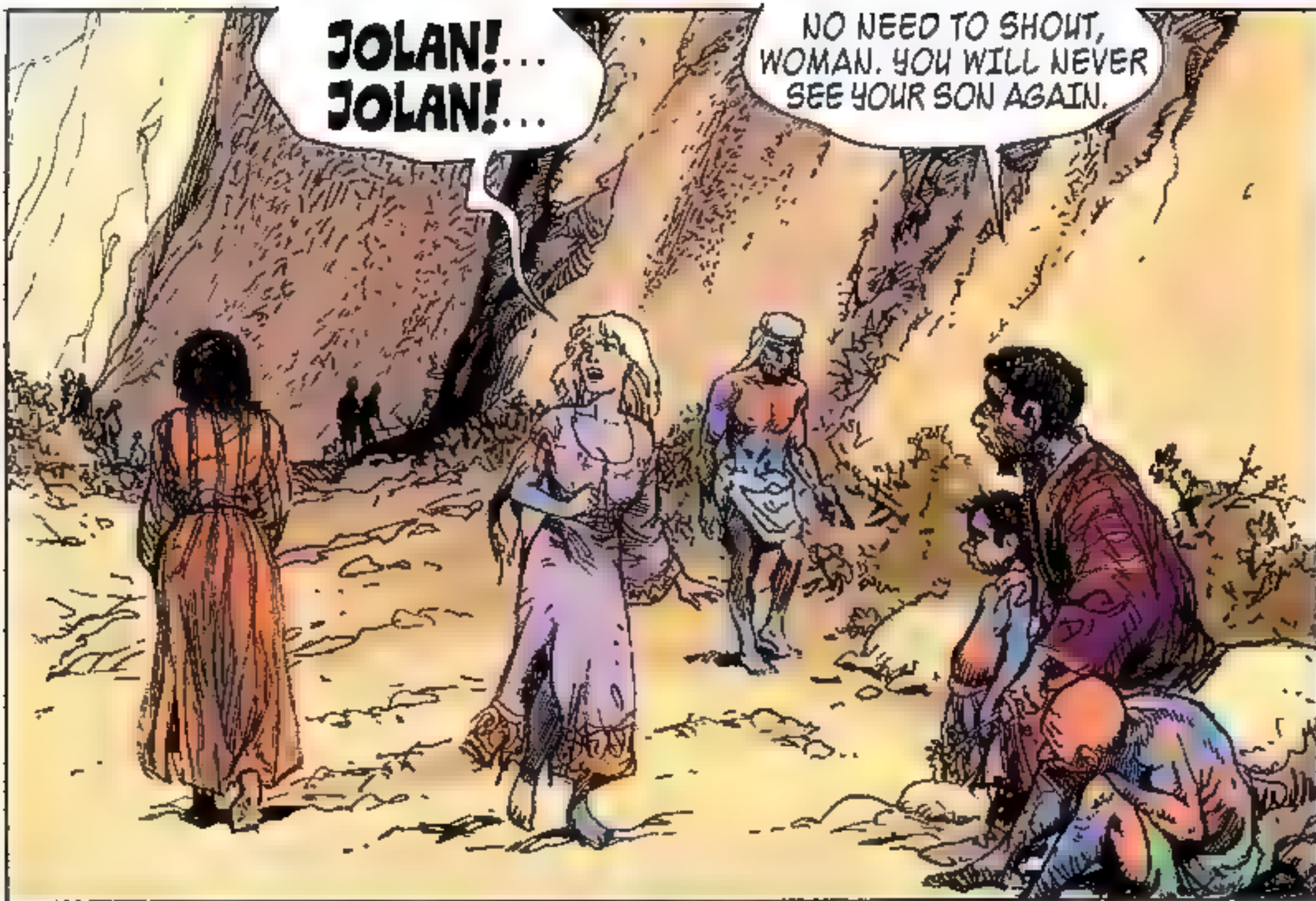
A WAY?

THIS!



WOLFCUB... WHERE'S JOLAN?

GONE. HE GAVE ME A KISS AND LEFT.



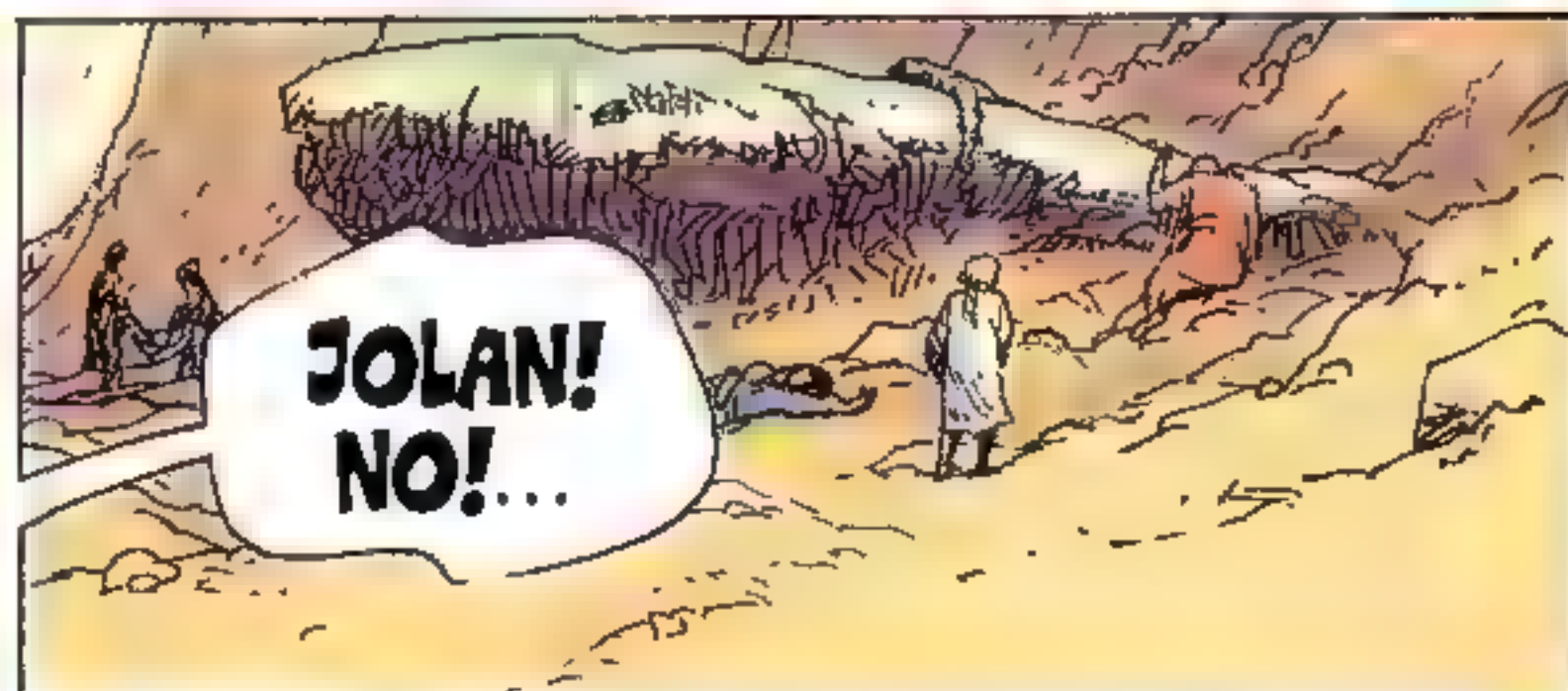
**JOLAN!...
JOLAN!...**

NO NEED TO SHOUT,
WOMAN. YOU WILL NEVER
SEE YOUR SON AGAIN.

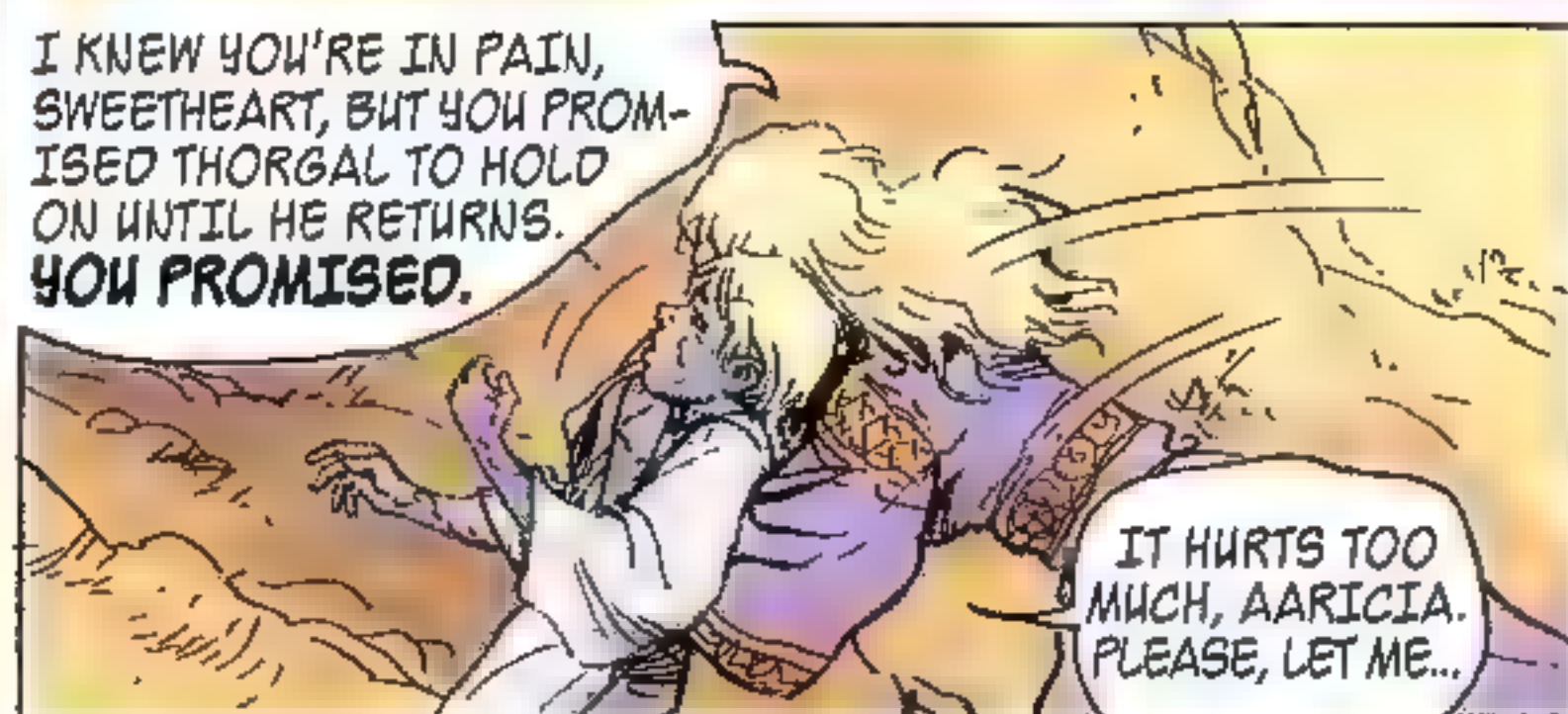


THE TIME HAS COME FOR
HIM TO GO TO THE ROCK OF
RELEASE. AS IT WILL COME
SOON FOR ALL OF US.

NO!!...

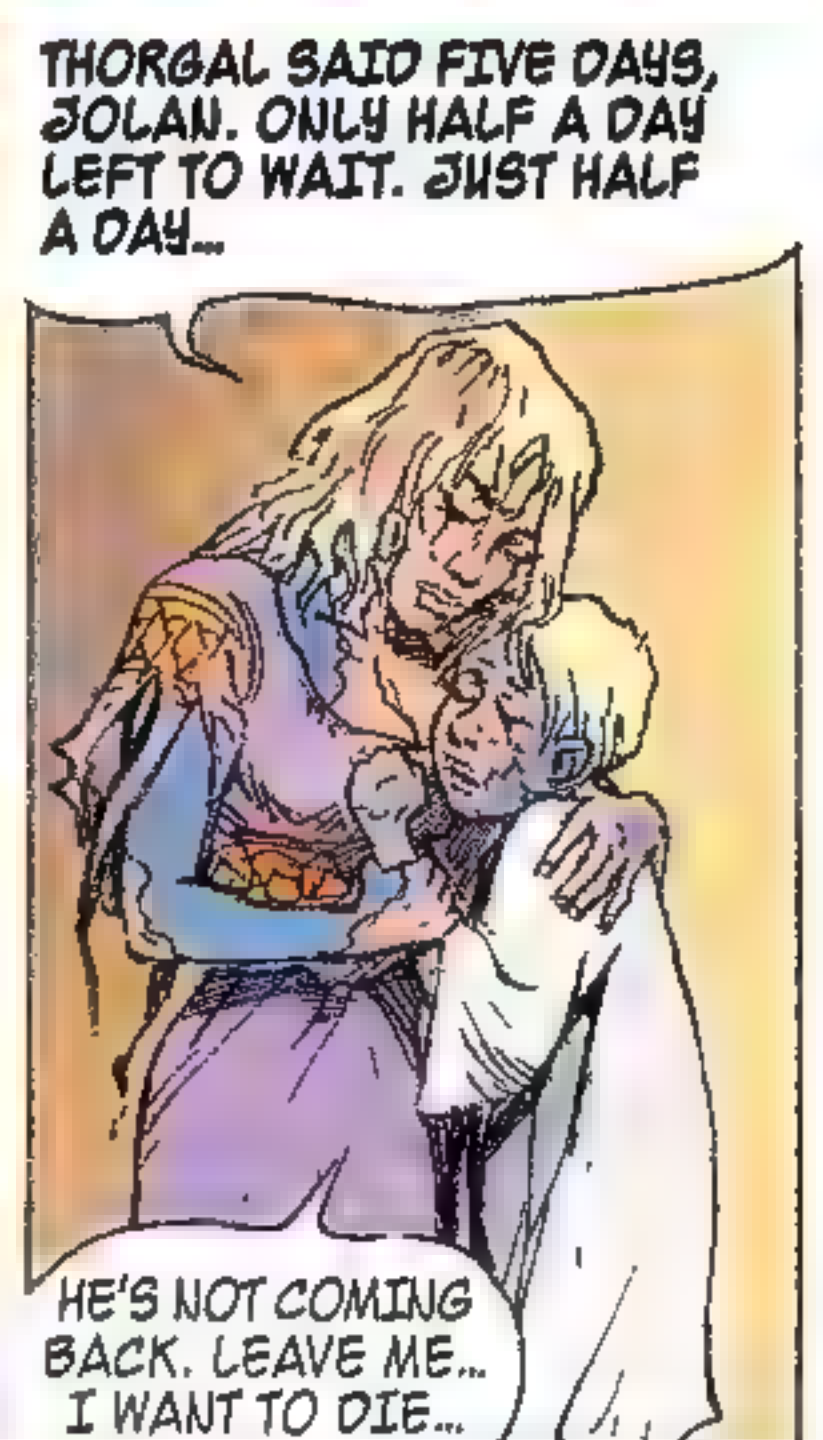


**JOLAN!
NO!...**



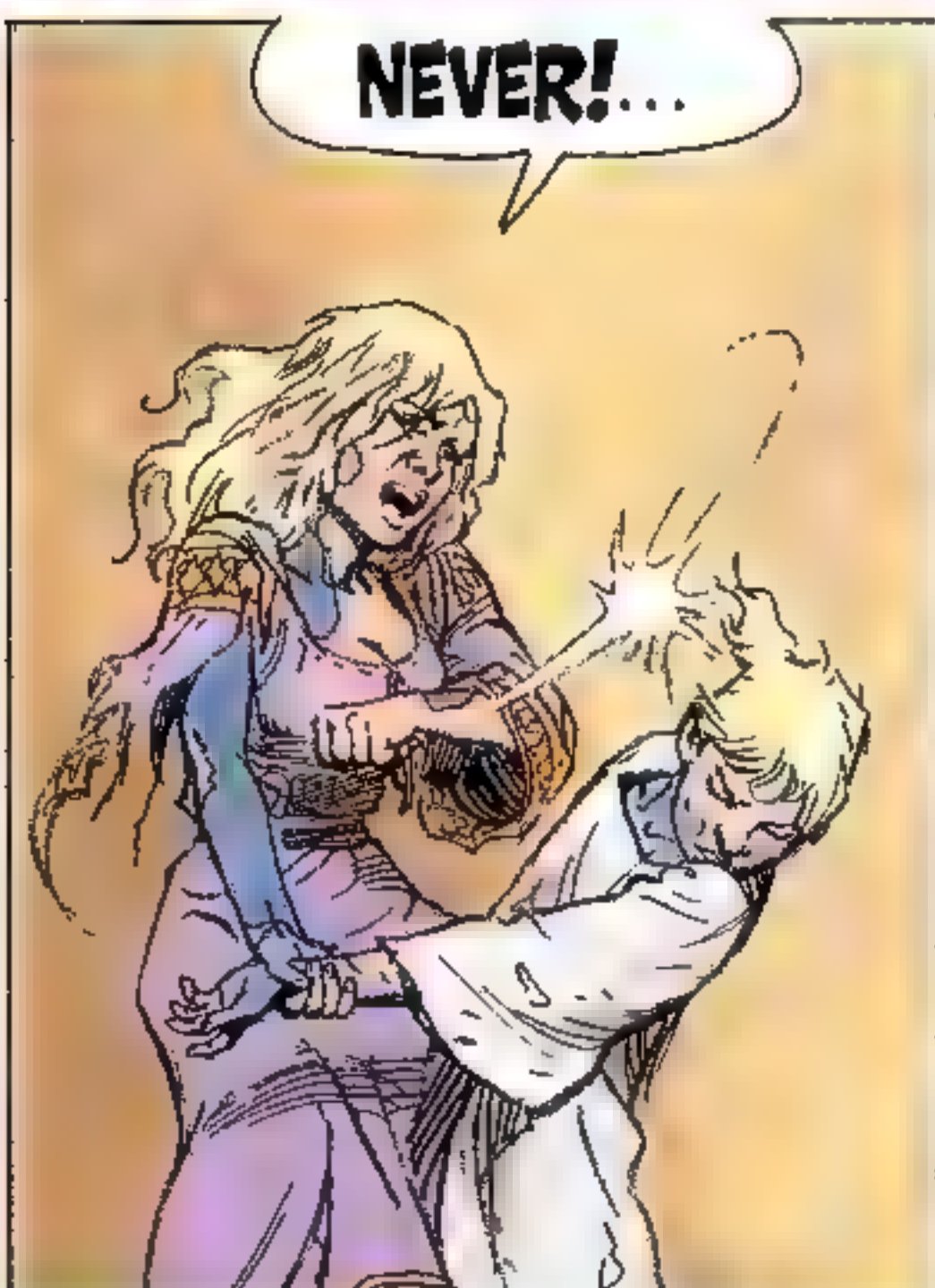
I KNEW YOU'RE IN PAIN,
SWEETHEART, BUT YOU PROM-
ISED THORGAL TO HOLD
ON UNTIL HE RETURNS.
YOU PROMISED.

IT HURTS TOO
MUCH, AARICIA.
PLEASE, LET ME...

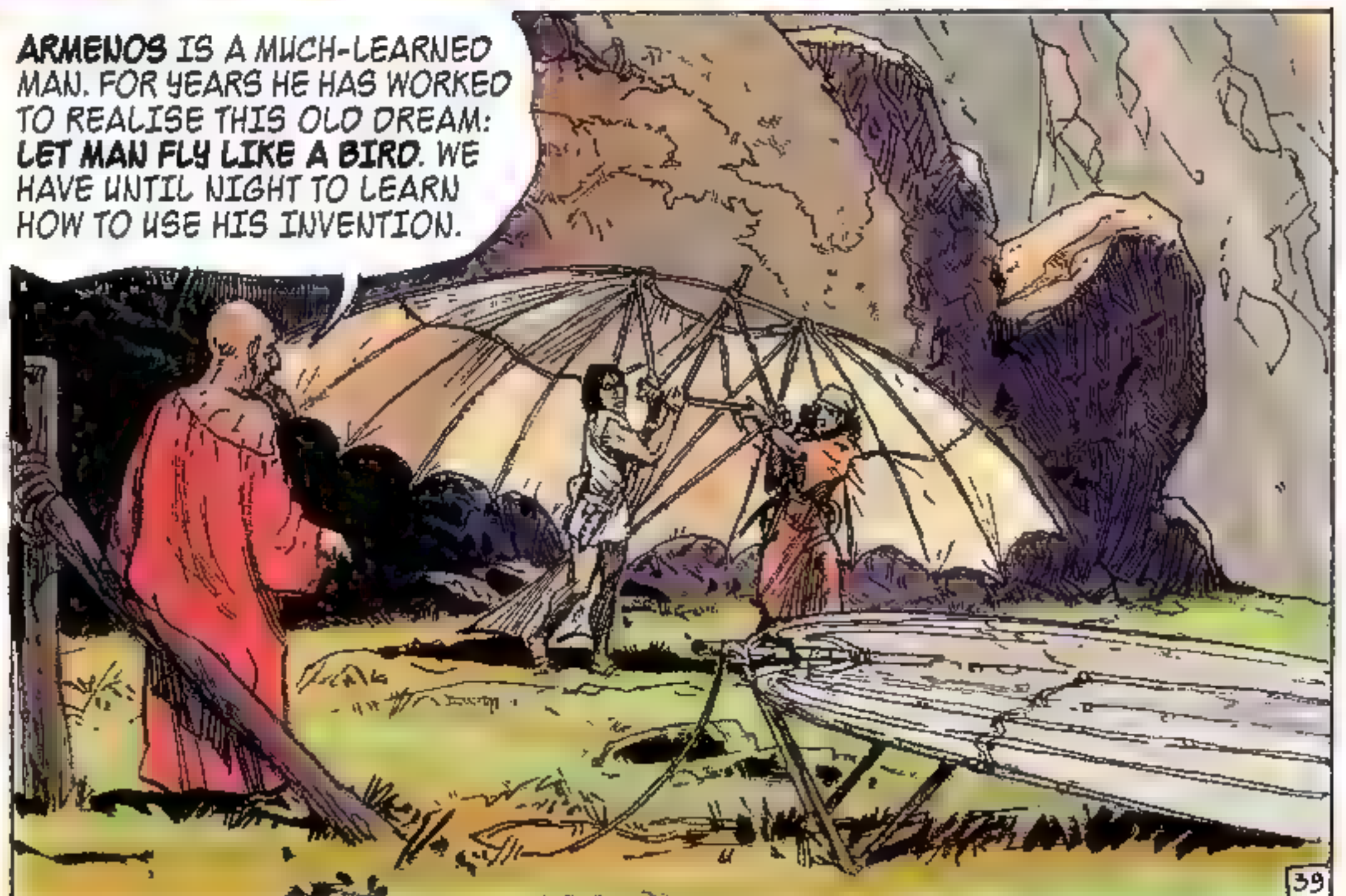


THORGAL SAID FIVE DAYS,
JOLAN. ONLY HALF A DAY
LEFT TO WAIT. JUST HALF
A DAY...

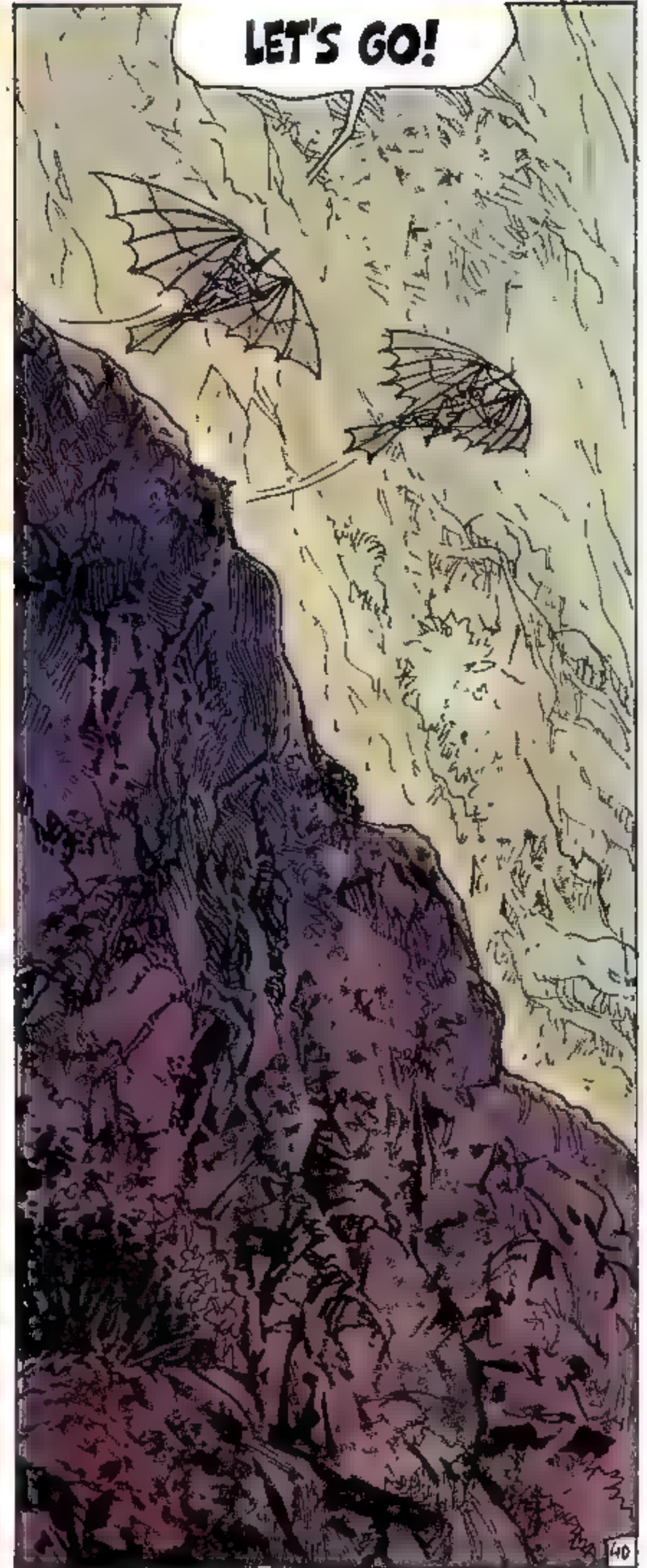
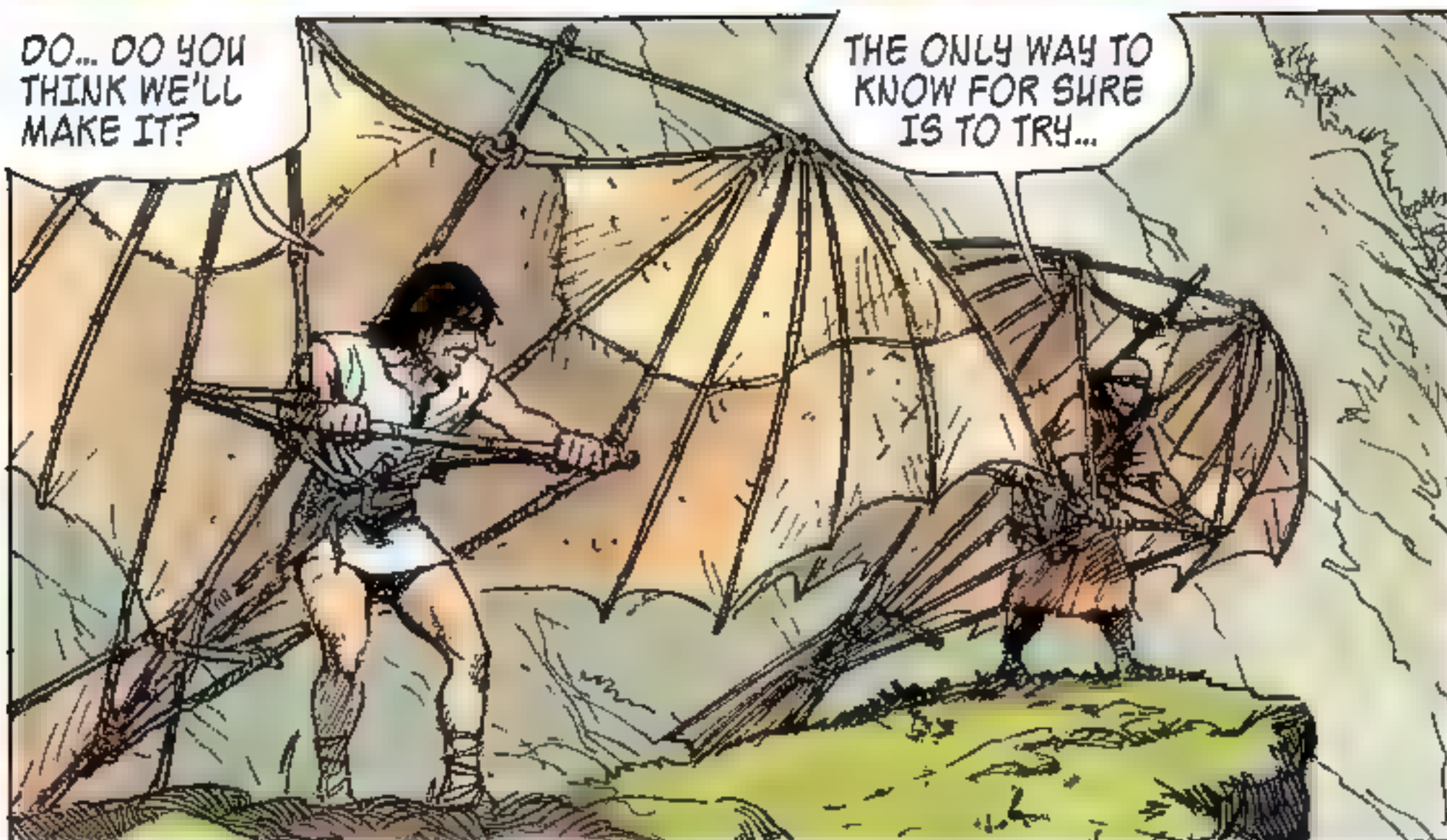
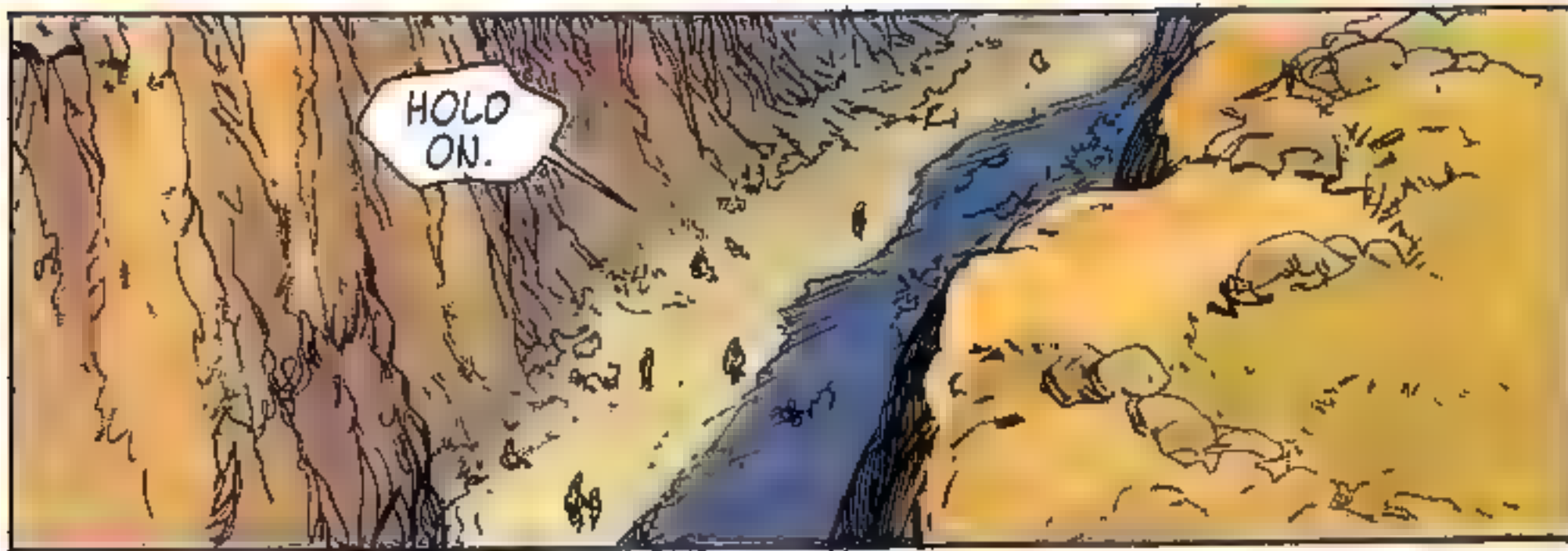
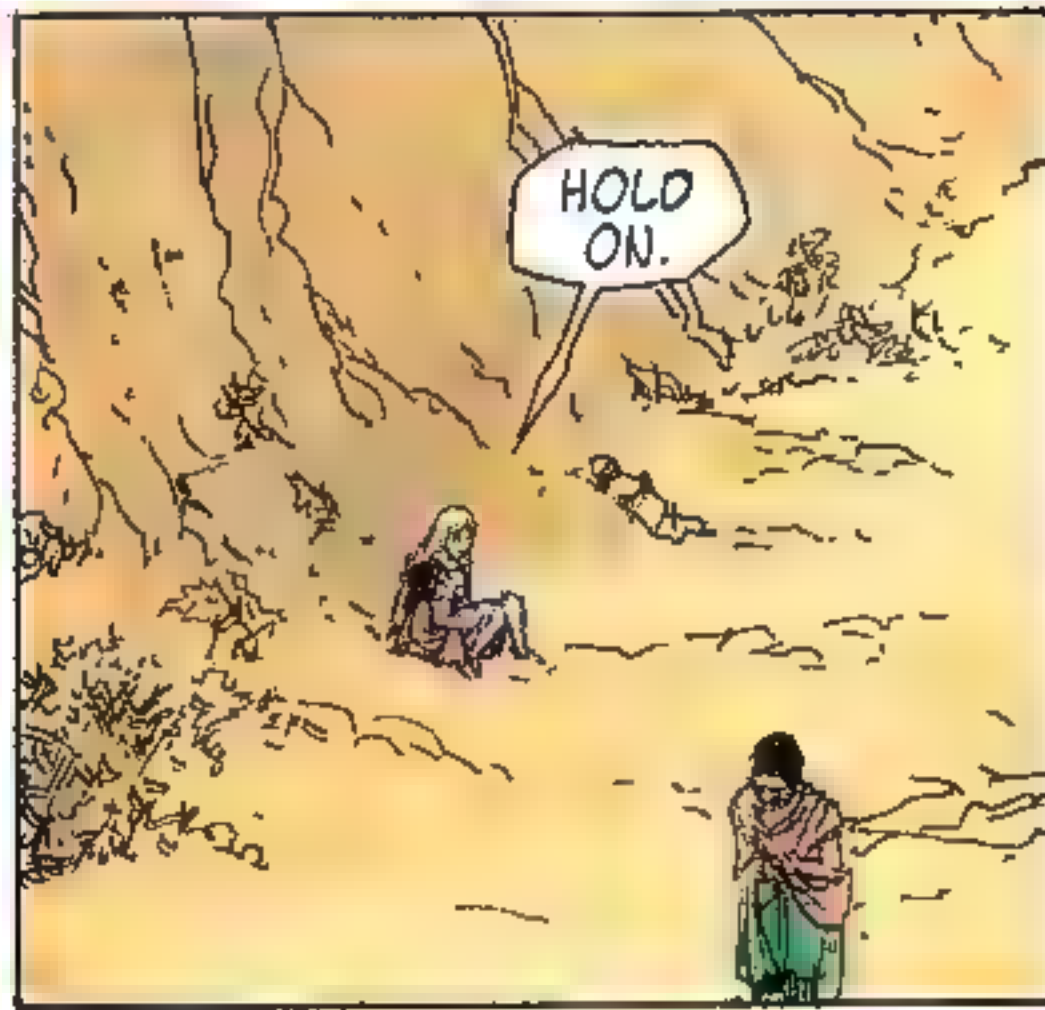
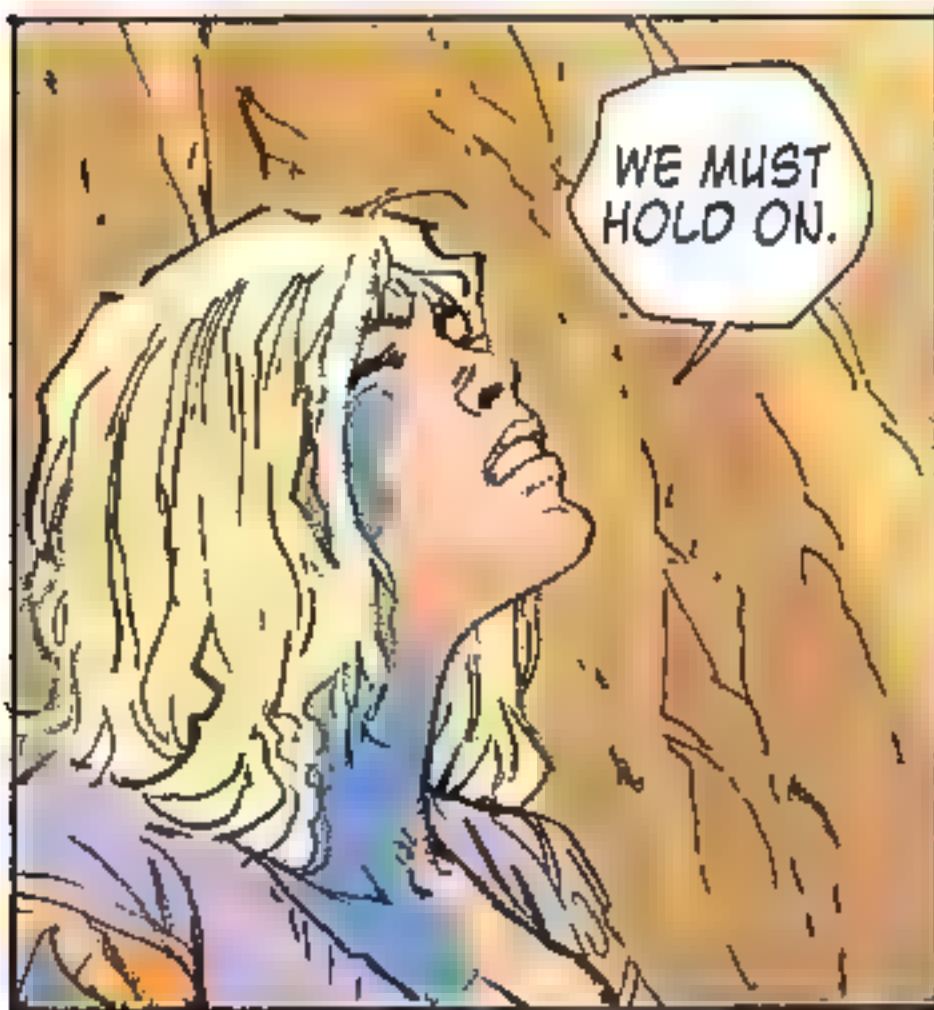
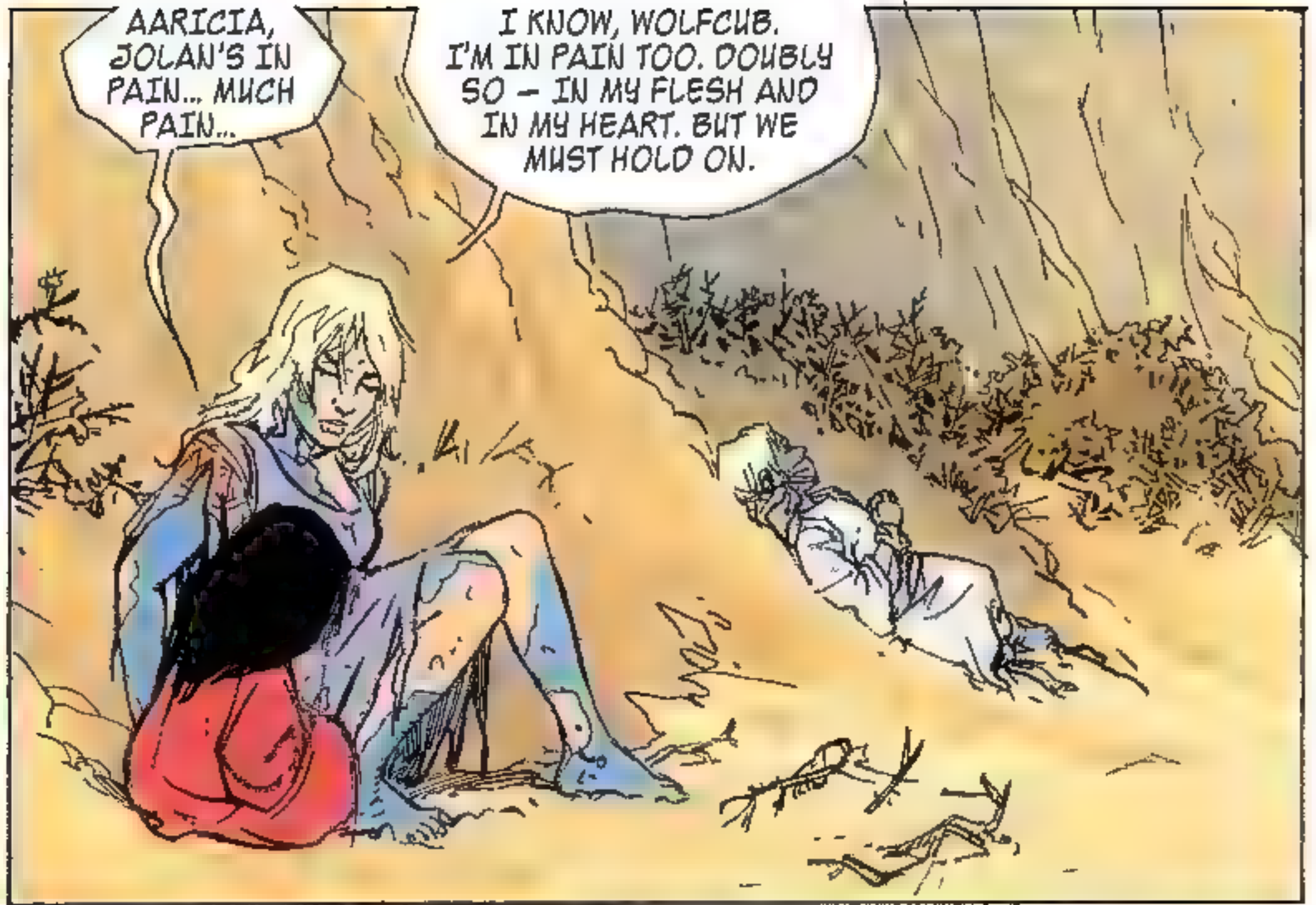
HE'S NOT COMING
BACK. LEAVE ME...
I WANT TO DIE...

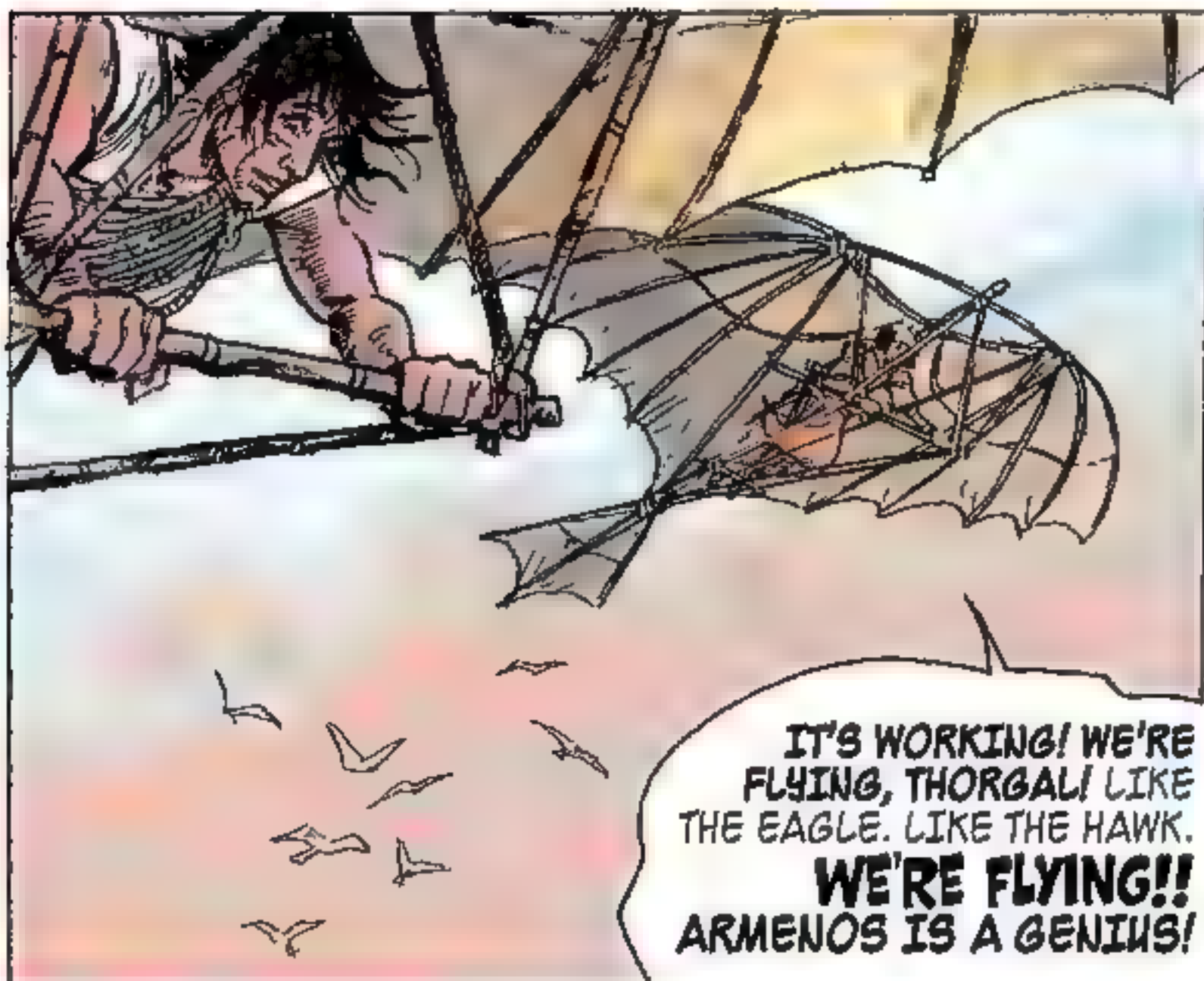


NEVER!...

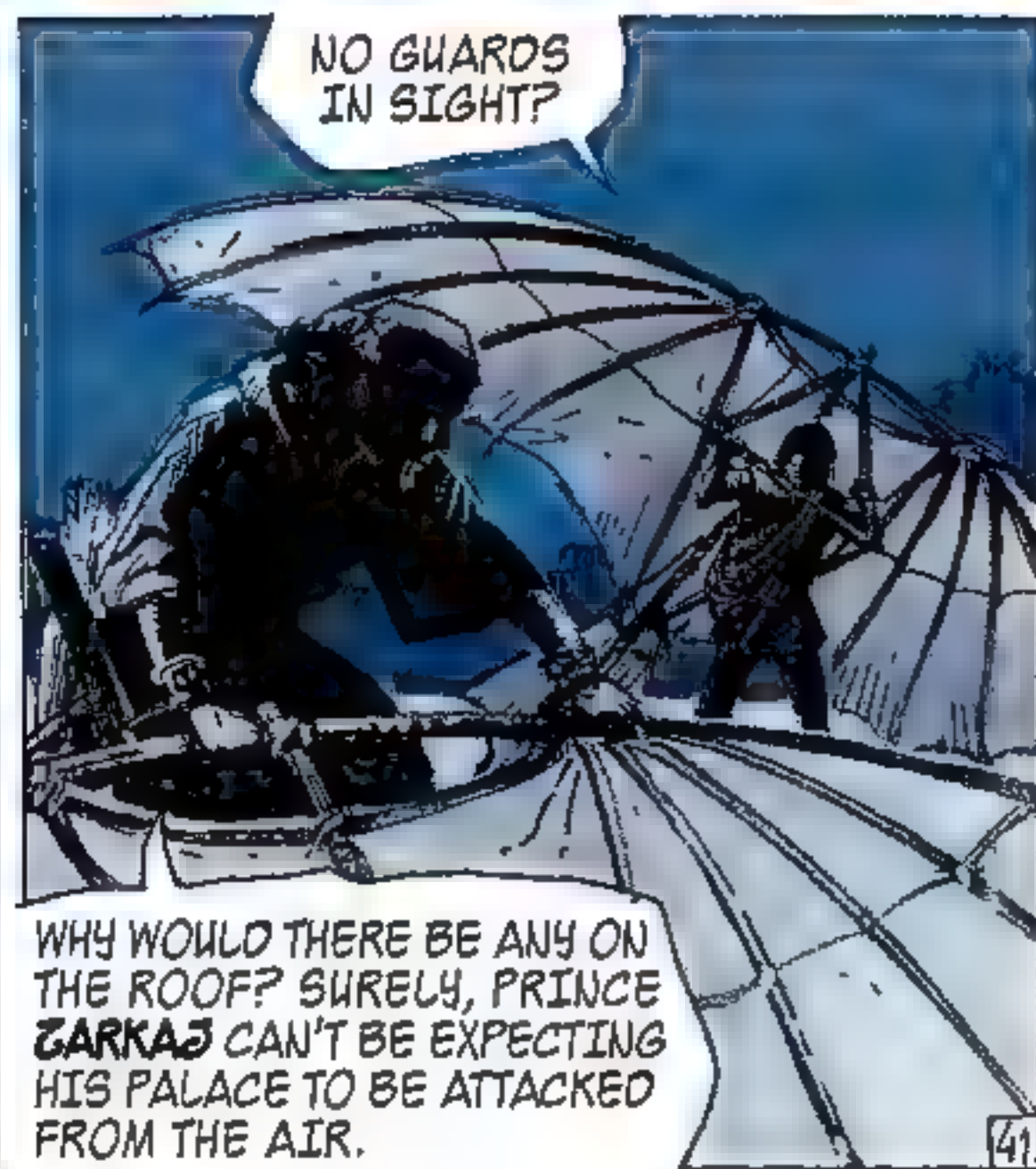
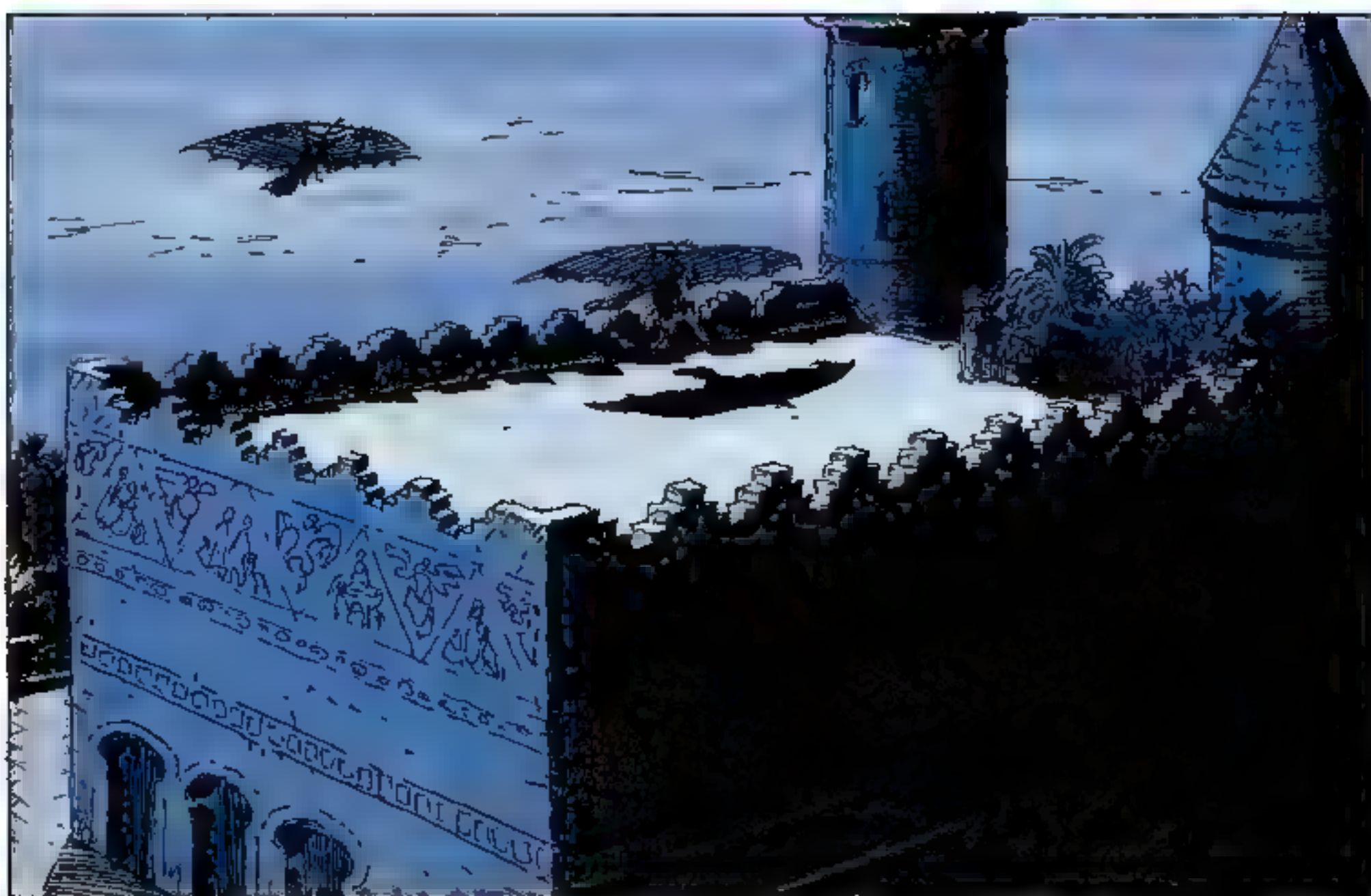
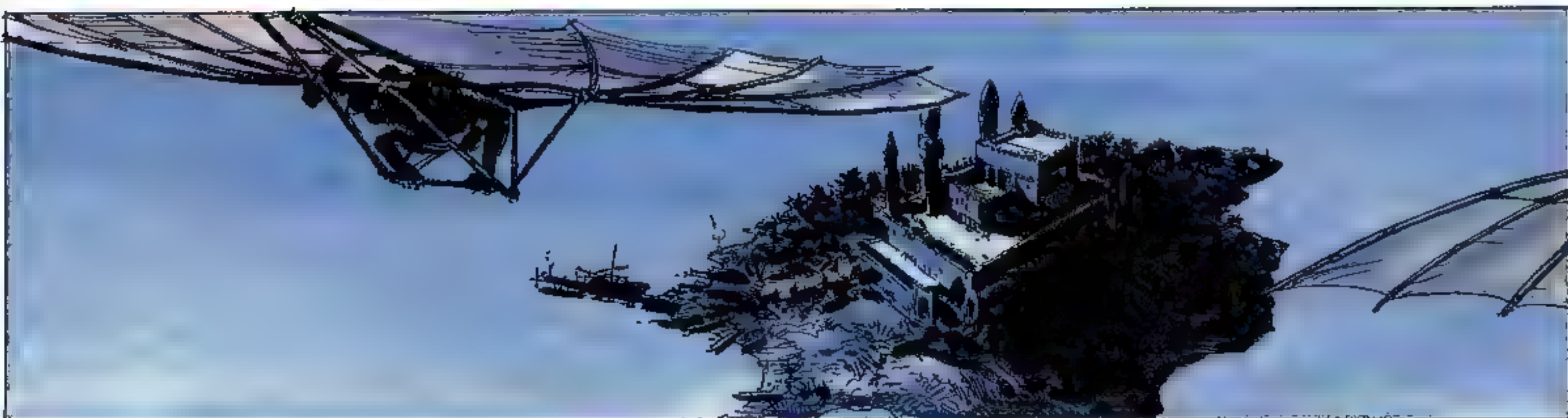
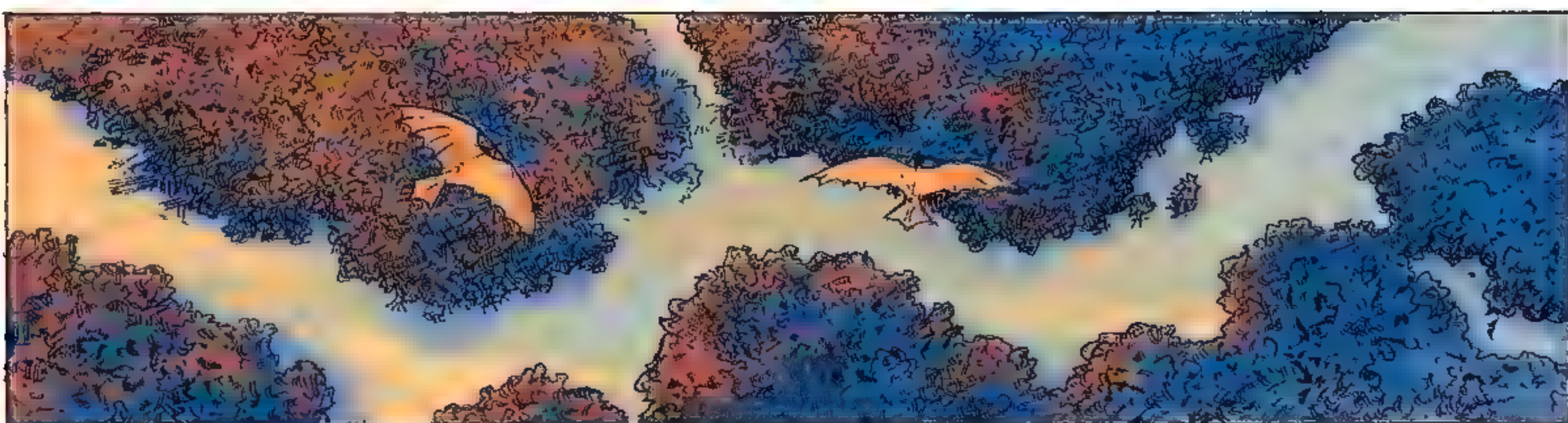


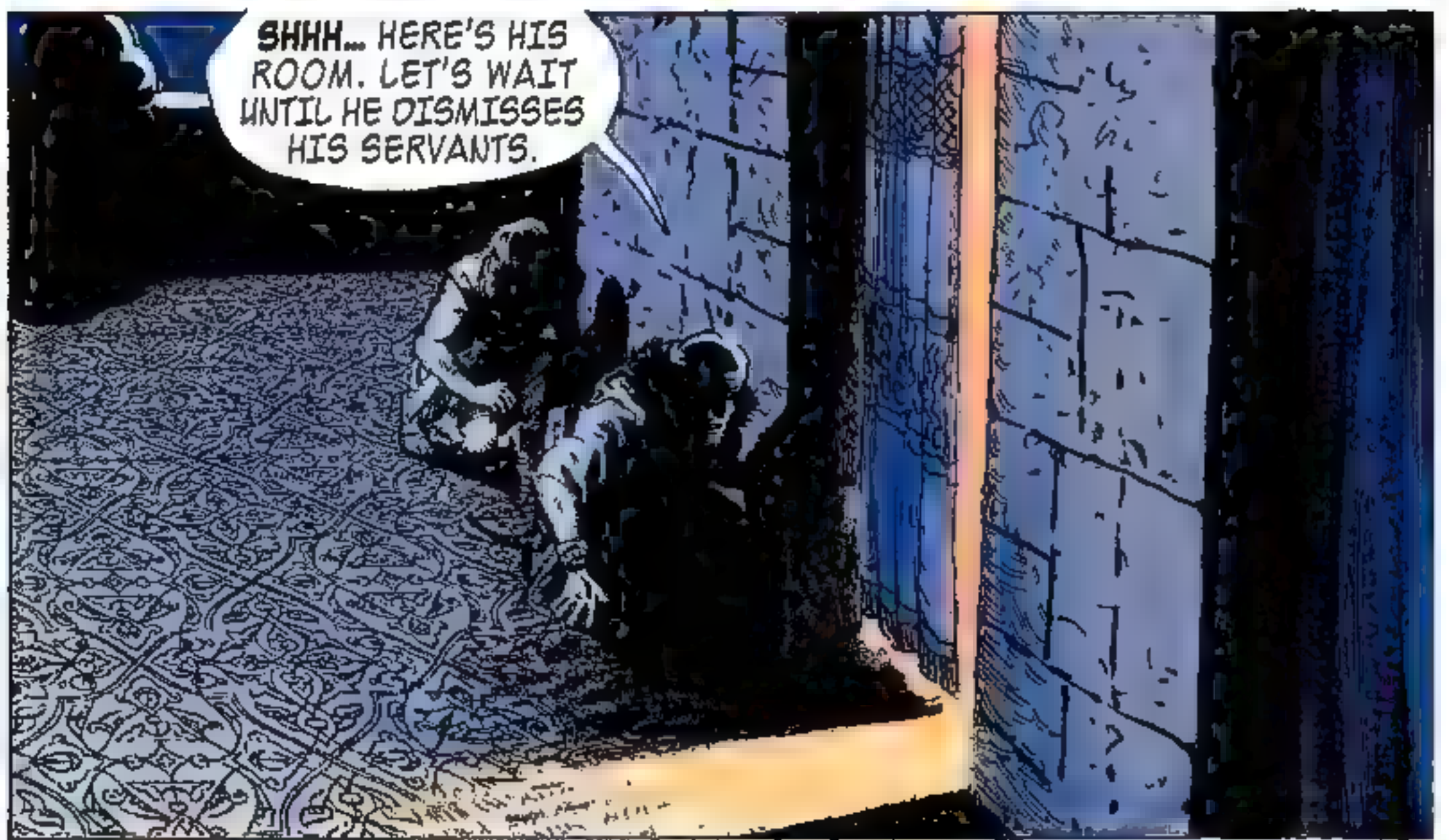
ARMENOS IS A MUCH-LEARNED
MAN. FOR YEARS HE HAS WORKED
TO REALISE THIS OLD DREAM:
LET MAN FLY LIKE A BIRD. WE
HAVE UNTIL NIGHT TO LEARN
HOW TO USE HIS INVENTION.





IT'S WORKING! WE'RE
FLYING, THORGAL! LIKE
THE EAGLE. LIKE THE HAWK.
WE'RE FLYING!!
ARMENOS IS A GENIUS!







LORD,
WHAT...?

AH, FINALLY...
YOU TOOK YOUR
TIME.



THAT'S ALL. GO, GO,
MAKE HASTE!

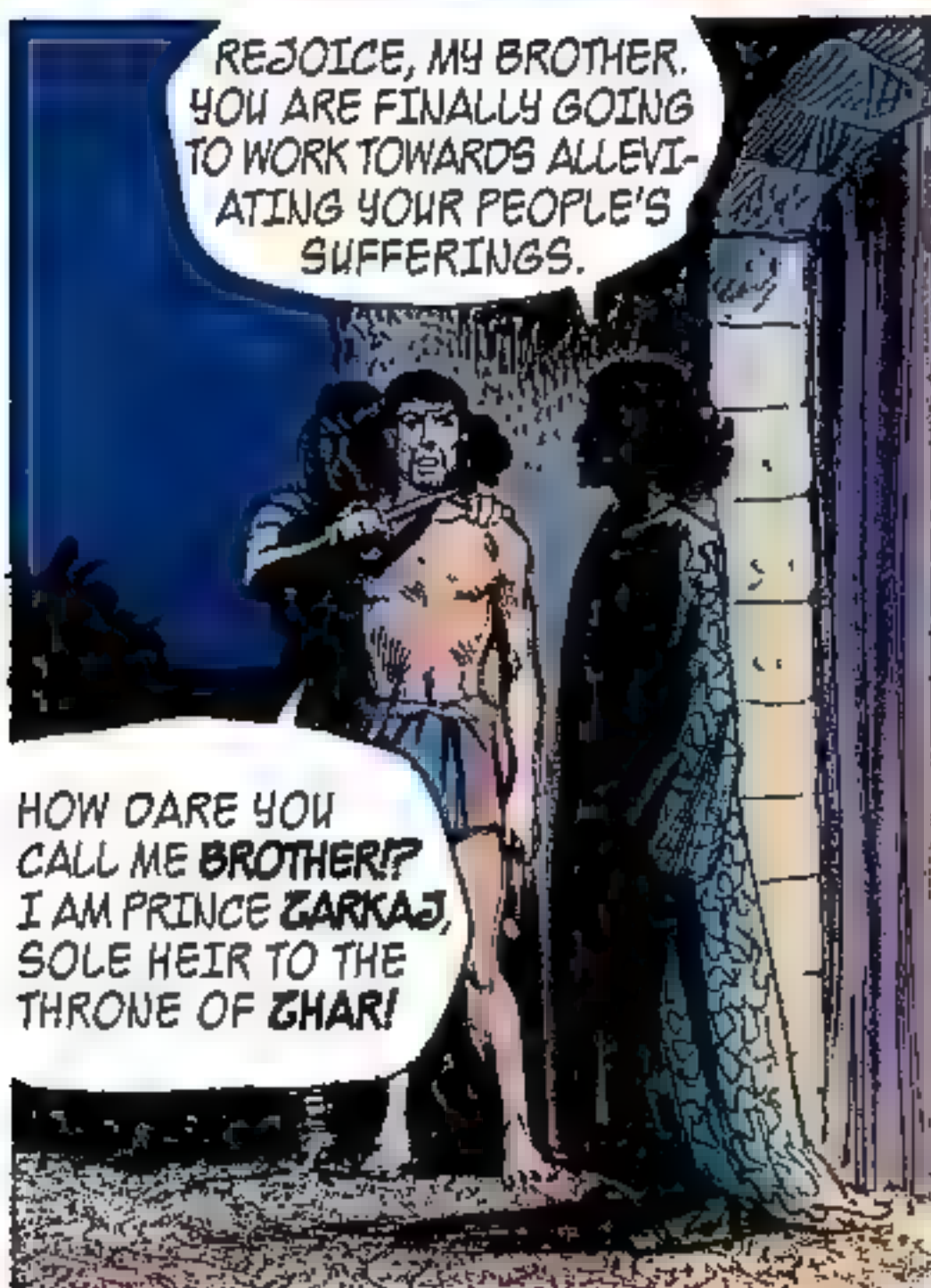


GO AND BRING ME
ARMENOS THE MAGE.
IMMEDIATELY.

IS ... THAT ALL?
WE THOUGHT WE'D
HEARD...



AS YOU
COMMAND,
LORD.



REJOICE, MY BROTHER.
YOU ARE FINALLY GOING
TO WORK TOWARDS ALLEVI-
ATING YOUR PEOPLE'S
SUFFERINGS.

HOW DARE YOU
CALL ME BROTHER?
I AM PRINCE ZARKAJ,
SOLE HEIR TO THE
THRONE OF ZHAR!



BY CHANCE ONLY.
I COULD HAVE
BEEN IN YOUR
PLACE.

MISER-
ABLE SWINE!
I WILL...

HUSH... KEEP HIM
QUIET, THORGAL.
THEY'RE COMING
BACK.



WHAT DO YOU
WANT FROM
ME NOW,
HEARTLESS
PRINCE?

I SHALL TELL YOU.
LEAVE US, YOU TWO.
AND I DON'T WANT
ANYONE TO DISTURB
US.

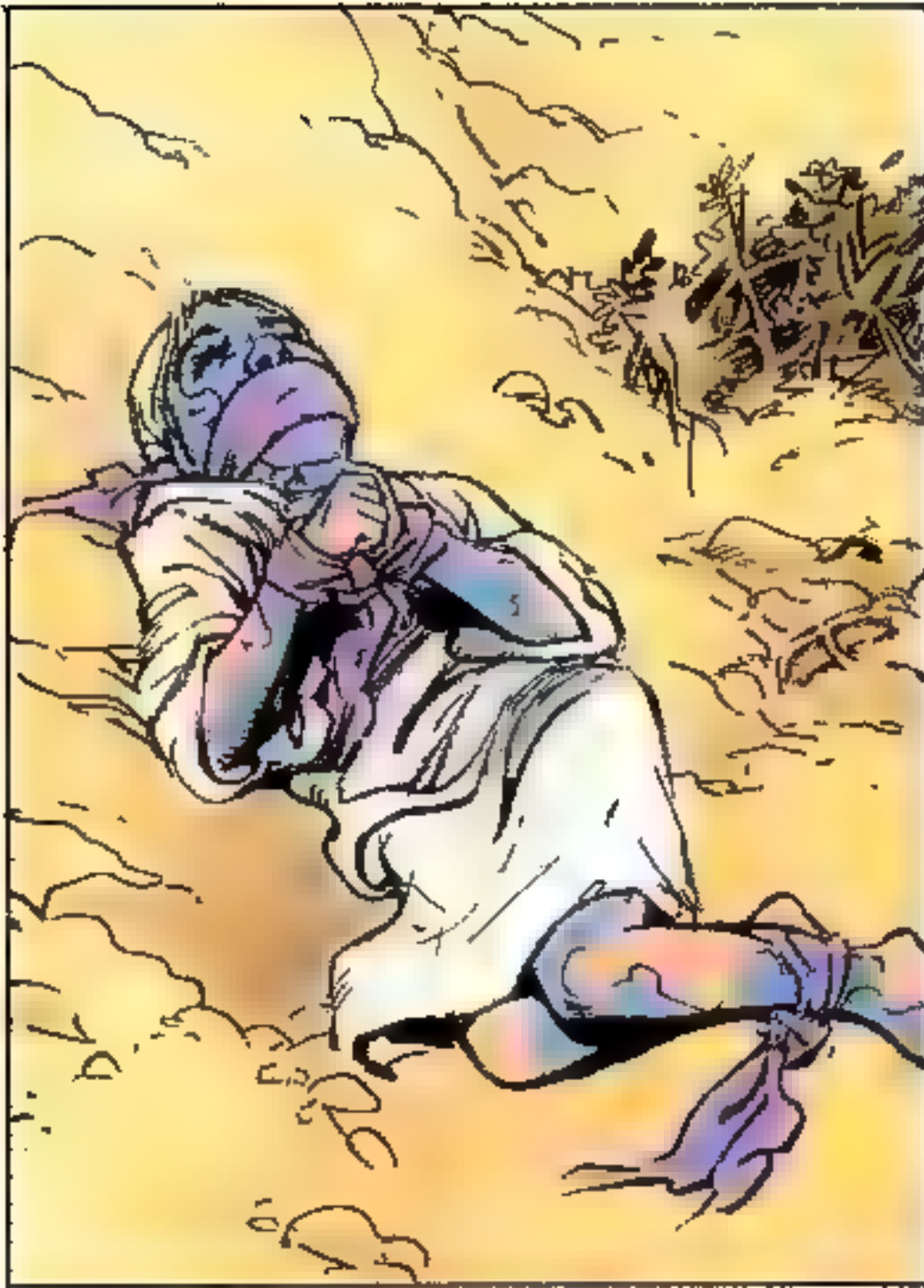


ARMENOS, MY OLD FRIEND, HOW MUCH
TIME WOULD YOU NEED TO PREPARE
ENOUGH BLUE PLAGUE CURE FOR
SEVERAL HUNDRED PEOPLE?

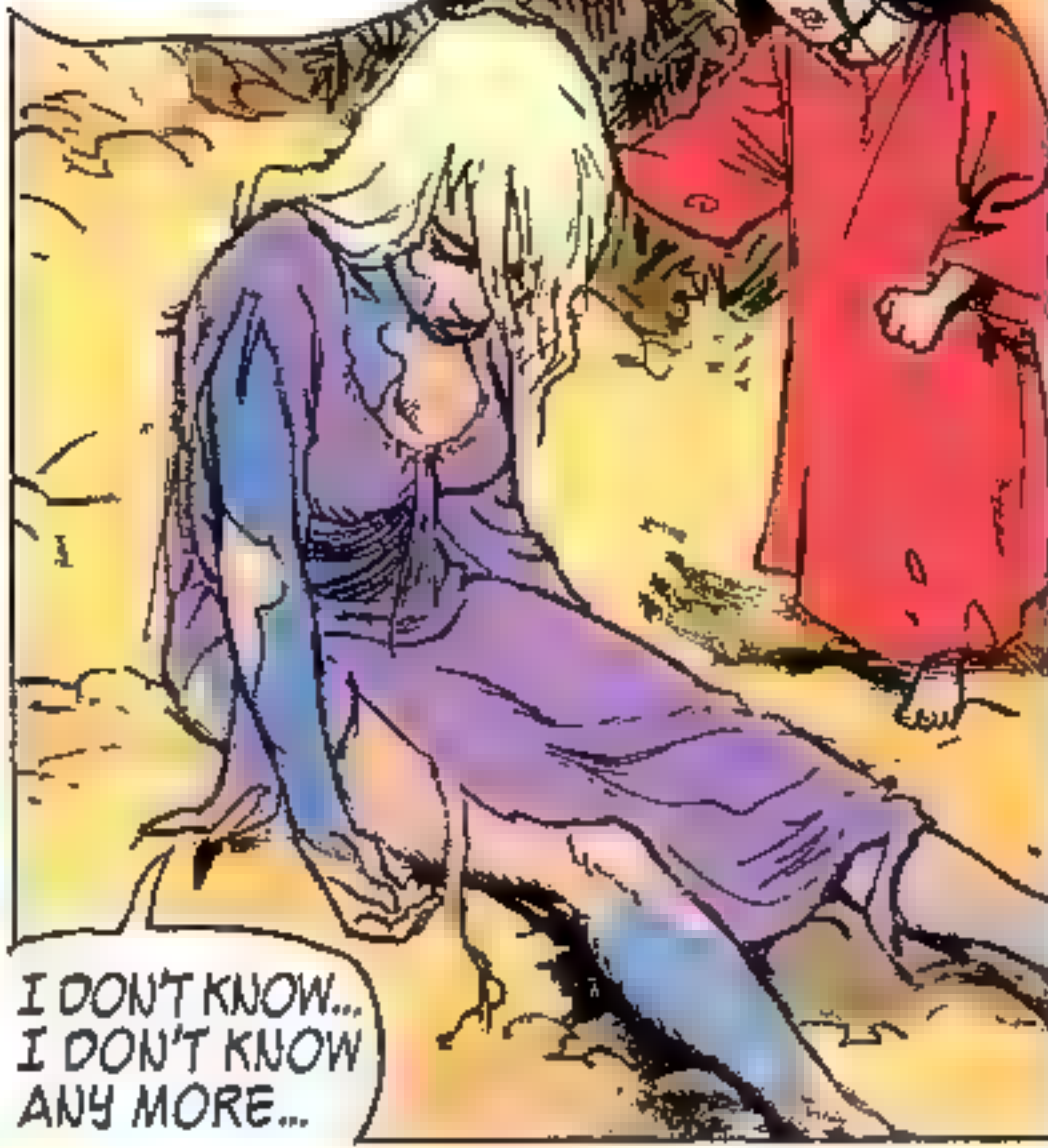
MY OLD
FRIEND
?...



YES, MY OLD FRIEND.
I BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO
GIVE YOU BOTH SOME
EXPLANATIONS.



AARICIA... TODAY IS THE **SIXTH DAY**. I COUNTED. DO YOU THINK THORGAL IS STILL COMING?

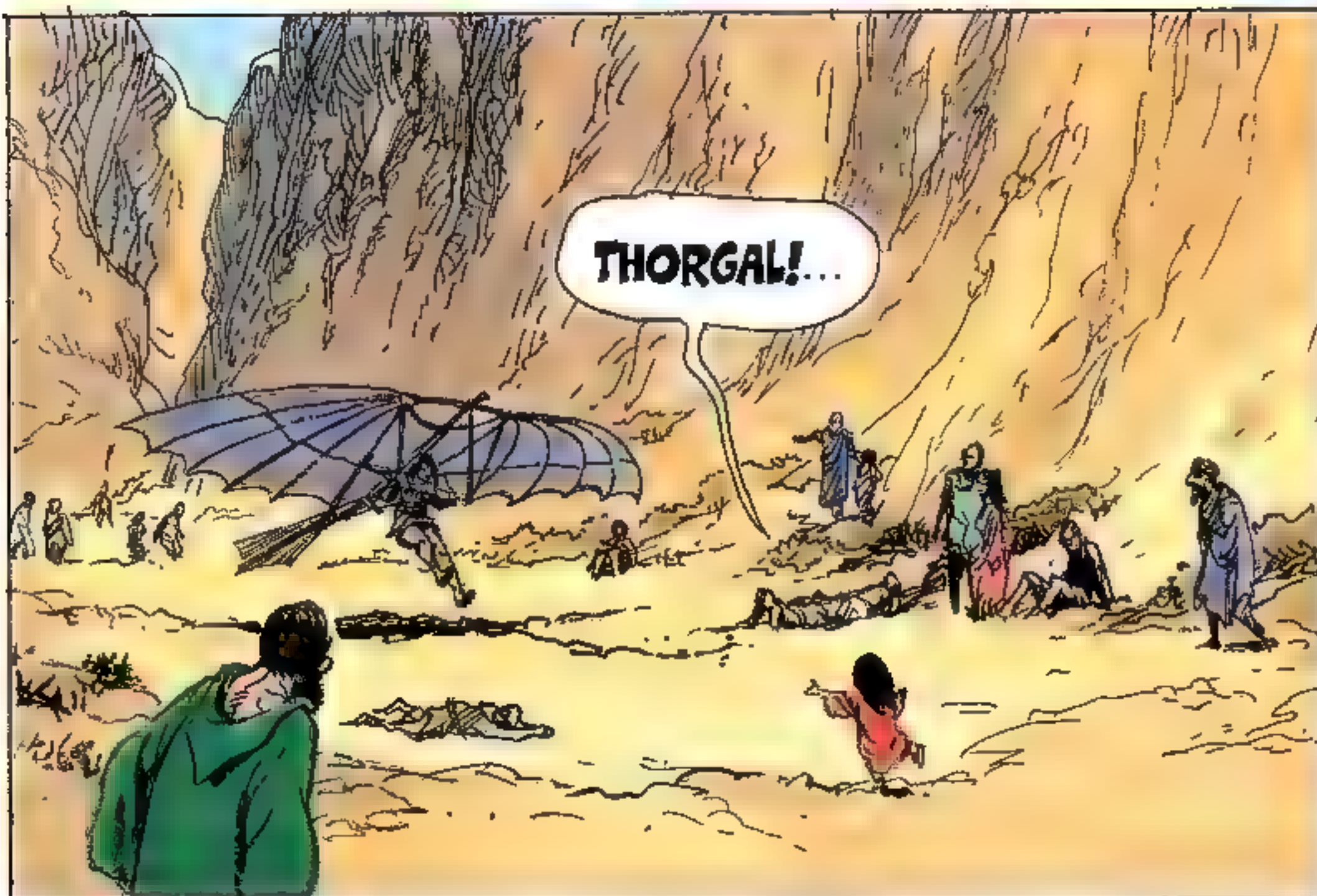


I DON'T KNOW... I DON'T KNOW ANY MORE...

WOLFCUB, SWEETHEART, I ... I THINK I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO BIND ME TOO.



LOOK!



THORGAL!...



THORGAL! COME QUICK! AARICIA AND JOLAN ARE DYING!

I KNOW, SWEETIE. TAKE ME TO THEM - HURRY!

THIS BREW WILL STOP THE PROGRESS OF THE DISEASE. IN A FEW HOURS, **ARMENOS** WILL GIVE US ANOTHER ONE TO CURE IT. POOR **JOLAN**; IT WAS CLOSE.

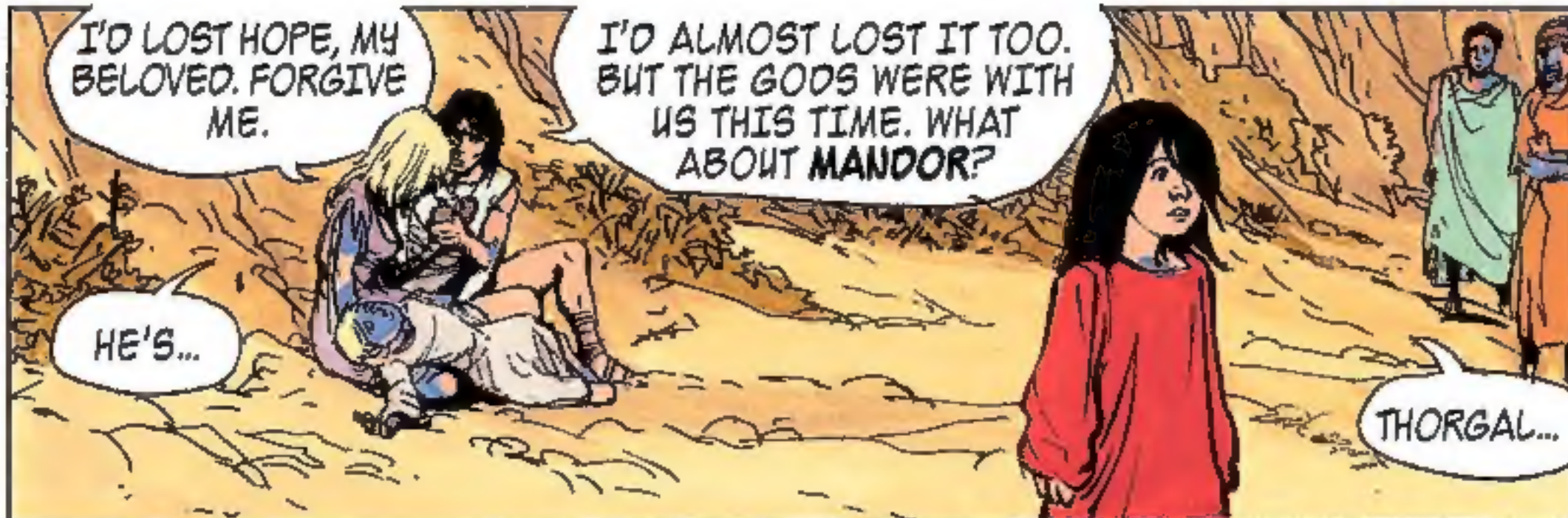


I'D LOST HOPE, MY BELOVED. FORGIVE ME.

HE'S...

I'D ALMOST LOST IT TOO. BUT THE GODS WERE WITH US THIS TIME. WHAT ABOUT **MANDOR**?

THORGAL...



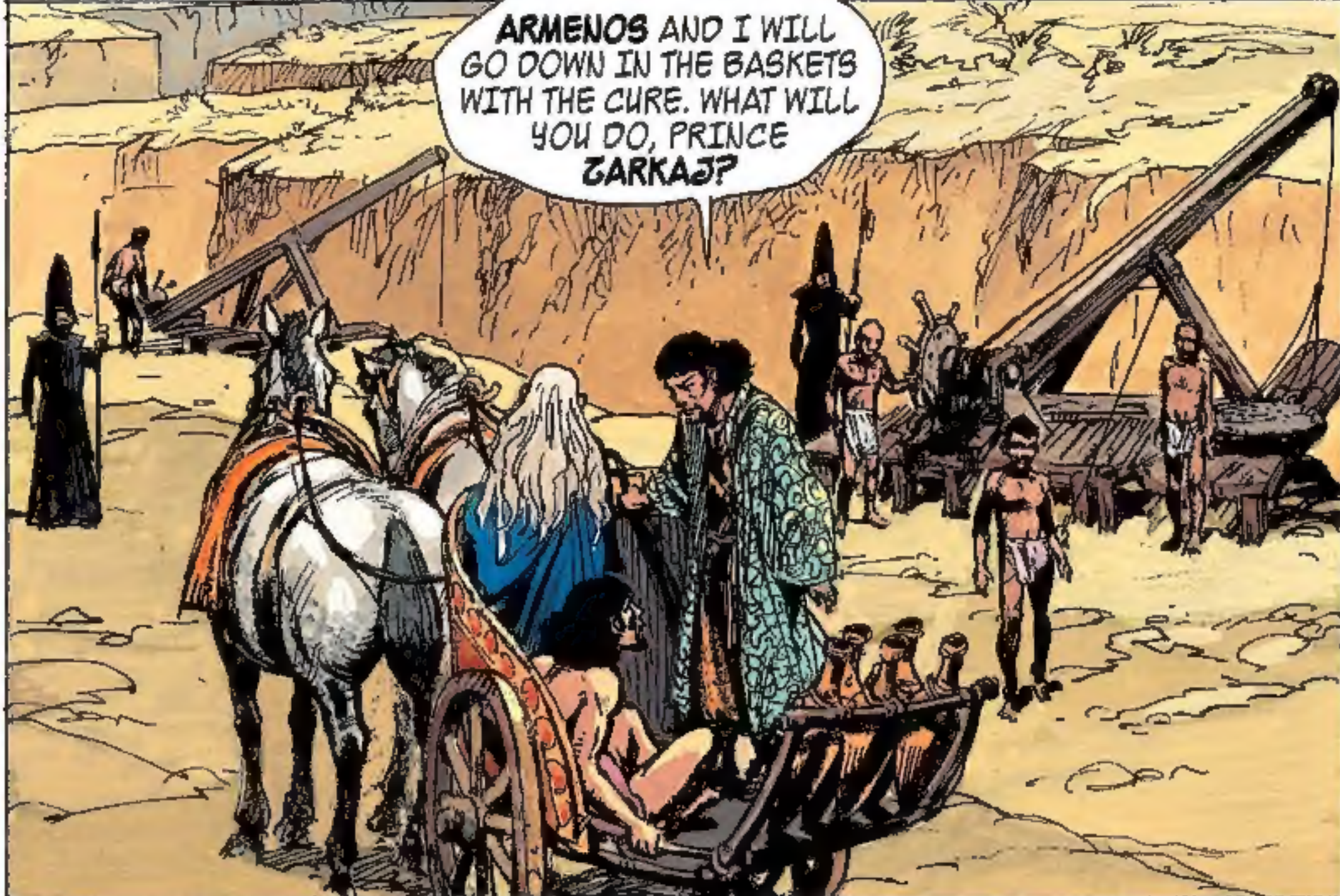
MY FRIENDS, PRINCE **ZARKAJ** HAS FINALLY FOUND A CURE FOR THE ACCURSED **BLUE PLAGUE**. HE WILL BE HERE IN A FEW HOURS. BE PATIENT A LITTLE LONGER.



WE'RE HERE.



ARMENOS AND I WILL GO DOWN IN THE BASKETS WITH THE CURE. WHAT WILL YOU DO, PRINCE **ZARKAJ**?



I WILL GO WITH YOU ... MY BROTHER.



MY STORY DIDN'T END AS I'D FEARED IT WOULD. TWO WEEKS LATER, THE SURVIVORS OF THE **BLUE PLAGUE** WENT HOME, SINGING THE PRAISES OF THE PRINCE THEY BELIEVED HAD SAVED THEM.

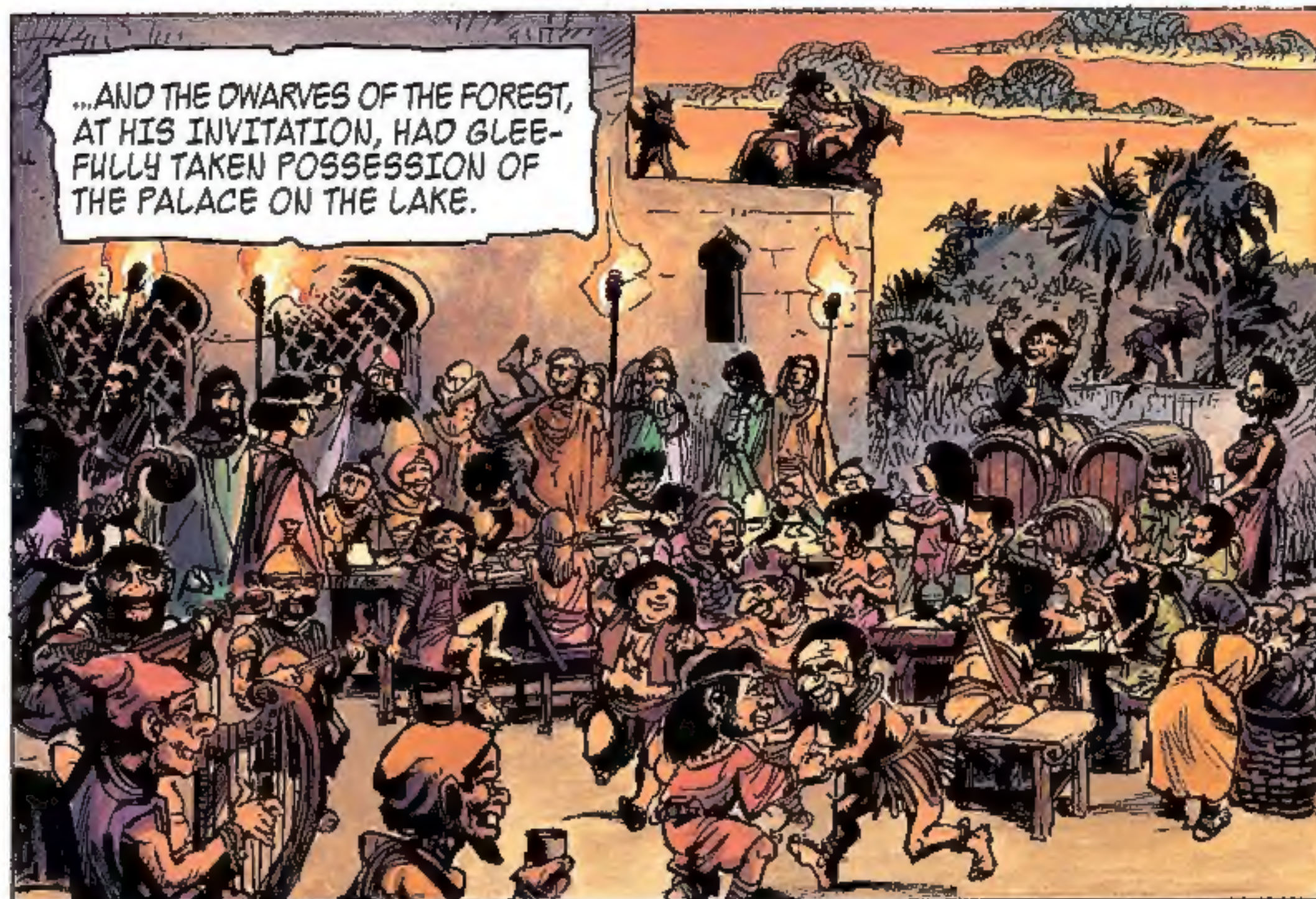
ARMENOS THE MAGE, HAVING DONE HIS DUTY AND REFUSED ALL PAYMENT, HAD RETURNED TO HIS LAIR ON THE SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAIN TO DREAM UP NEW INVENTIONS.



ZARKAJ HAD DISCOVERED A BROTHER HE'D NEVER KNOWN HE HAD. HAVING ALSO FOUND HIS DIGNITY AS MAN AND PRINCE, HE'D DECIDED THAT THE KINGDOM OF **ZHAR** WAS BIG ENOUGH FOR TWO...



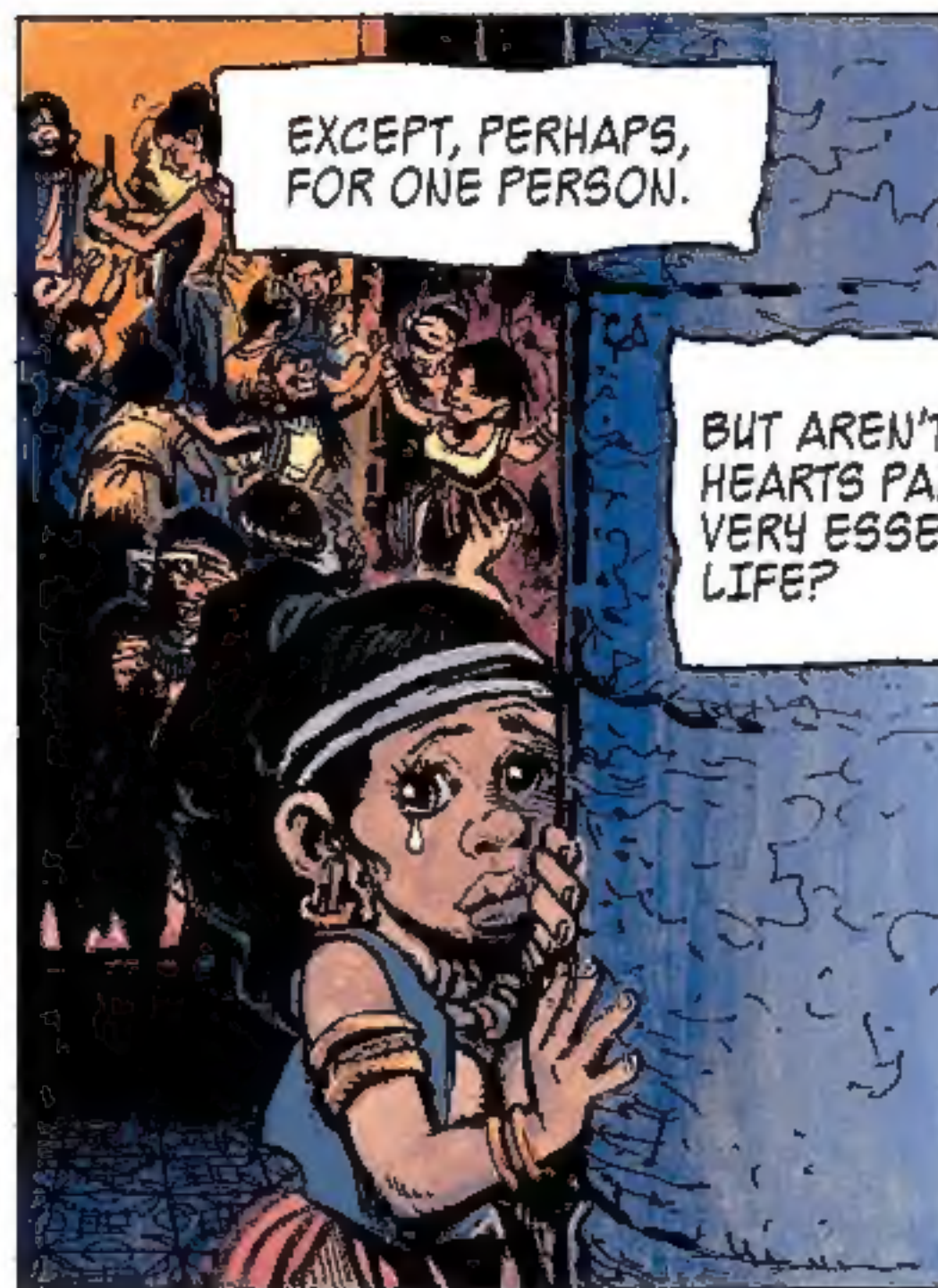
...AND THE DWARVES OF THE FOREST, AT HIS INVITATION, HAD GLEEFULLY TAKEN POSSESSION OF THE PALACE ON THE LAKE.



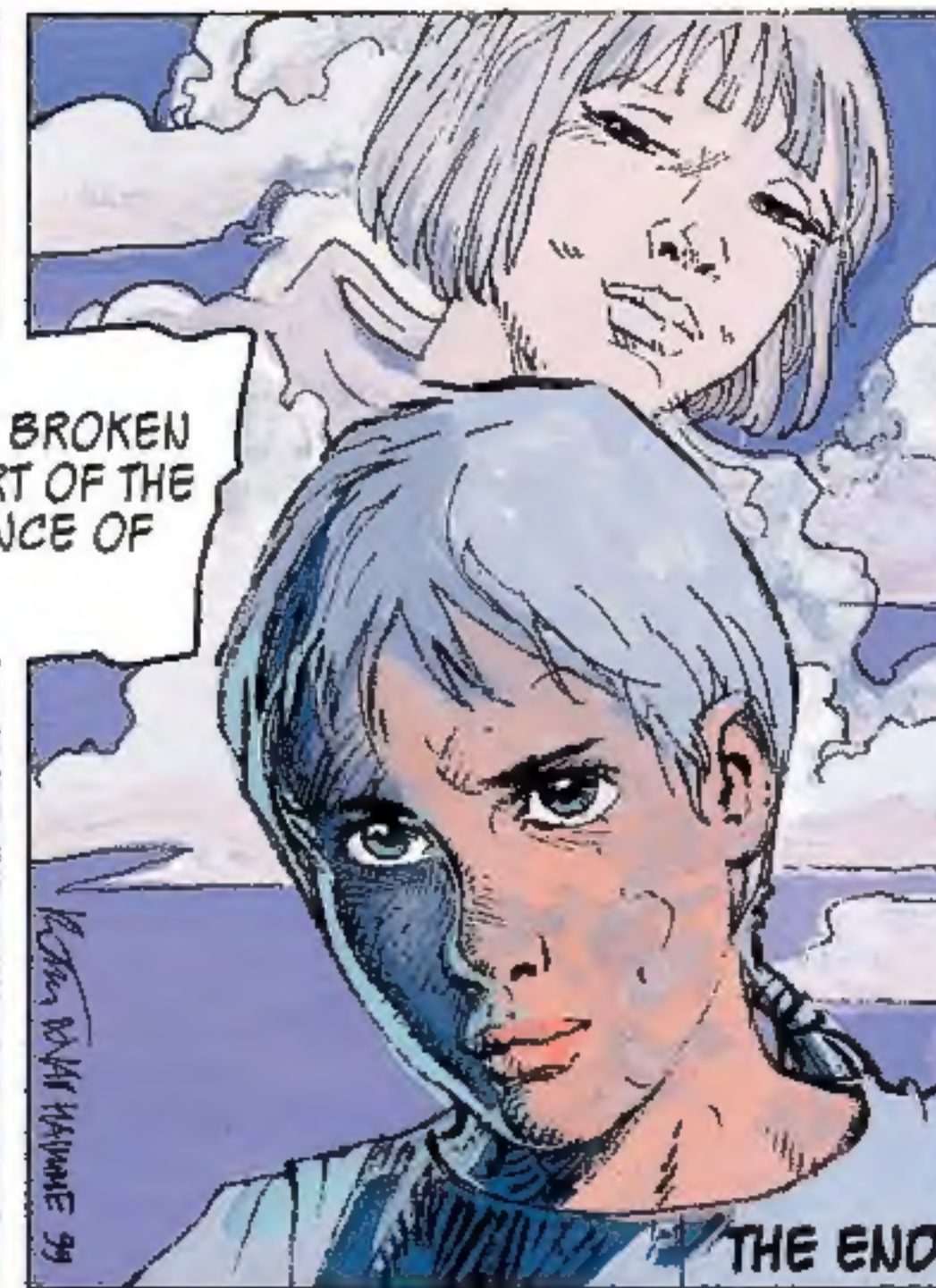
ALL WAS WELL THAT ENDED WELL, THEN, AND EVERYONE WAS HAPPY.



EXCEPT, PERHAPS, FOR ONE PERSON.



BUT AREN'T BROKEN HEARTS PART OF THE VERY ESSENCE OF LIFE?



THE END

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